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NEIGHBOURS

On the Eve of the Holocaust

Polish-Jewish Relations
in Soviet-Occupied
Eastern Poland, 1939–1941

by Mark Paul

Abridged Internet Edition
of a Forthcoming Publication

The copious annotations in the published edition
have not been included in this abridged Internet version of

Neighbours on the Eve of the Holocaust

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Foreword

On August 23, 1939, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union entered into a Non-Aggression Pact (the so-called Motov-Ribbentrop Pact) which paved the way for the imminent invasion of Poland. A Secret Protocol to that Pact provided for the partition of Poland, as well as for Soviet domination of the Baltic States and Bessarabia. Germany attacked Poland on September 1st, while the Soviet strike was delayed until September 17th. Polish forces continued to fight pitched battles with the Germans until early October 1939 (the last large battle was fought at Kock on October 5th), after which the struggle went underground.

After overrunning Poland, the Nazis and Soviets agreed, under the terms of a Secret Supplementary Protocol to the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty of September 28, 1939, to a redrawn common border. Each side seized roughly half of Poland, thus ensuring that the country was once again wiped off the face of Europe. They also undertook a common struggle against the Polish independence movement—the suppression "all beginnings" of "Polish agitation"—and to keep each other informed of their progress. In fact, this ushered in a period of close cooperation between the NKVD and the Gestapo. Contacts between the two organizations intensified and conferences were held to discuss how best to combat Polish resistance and eradicate Polish national existence. A joint instructional centre for officers of the NKVD officer and the Gestapo was opened at Zakopane in December 1939. The decision to massacre Polish officers at Katyn (transliterated as Katyń in Polish) was taken concurrently with a conference of high officials of the Gestapo and NKVD convened in Zakopane on February 20, 1940. While the Soviets were undertook the extermination of captured Polish officers, the Germans carried out, from March 31, a parallel "Operation AB" aimed at destroying Poland's elites.

This partnership did not remain a secret for long. On September 19th, *Pravda* published a Soviet-German communiqué confirming the joint role of Hitler's and Stalin's armies in the invasion of Poland. On September 30th, *Pravda* proudly announced to millions of its readers that "German-Soviet friendship is now established forever." In a speech delivered before the Supreme Soviet on October 31st, Vyacheslav Molotov, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, openly applauded the destruction of Poland:

> A short blow at Poland from the German Army, followed by one from the Red Army was enough to reduce to nothing this monster child of the Treaty of Versailles. … One may like or dislike Hitlerism, but every sane person will understand that that ideology cannot be destroyed by force. It is, therefore, not only nonsensical but also criminal to pursue a war "for the destruction of Hitlerism."

The Nazi-Soviet alliance lasted for over a year and a half, until shortly before Germany turned on its erstwhile ally on June 22, 1941. During this time the Soviet Union was the principal supplier of much needed raw materials for the German war machine which, in the meantime, occupied Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, much of France, and smashed the Western Forces.

The Soviet invaders struck a major blow not only to Polish statehood, but also to Polish institutions, cultural and religious life, state officials and military officers, as well as the civilian population. As the evidence gathered here shows, in addition to a "class" component which struck at the "enemies" of the people (i.e., the Soviet state), the assault also had a marked anti-Polish dimension. It was exacerbated by a calculated fueling of ethnic tensions which pitted Ukrainians, Belorussians, and Jews against ethnic Poles. According to historian Anna Cienciala,

> As in German-occupied Poland, Soviet policy was to liquidate the educated Poles. At first, Soviet authorities called on the peasants, who were predominantly Ukrainian or Belorussian, to "settle accounts" with Polish landlords and take what they wanted. This led to a short but brutal period of murder and robbery perpetrated by the worst elements. At the same time, Soviet NKVD (security) officers shot many Polish landowners, officers, teachers, priests, judges, administrators, policemen, border guards, etc., out of hand, according to lists prepared beforehand. …
>
> While most of the Jewish population of eastern Poland was politically passive, some Jews, especially young men and women with Communist sympathies, cooperated with the Soviets. They became prominent in the new local militia and helped Soviet authorities in hunting down Polish political leaders and administrators. Although these pro-Communist Jews made up a very small minority of the total Jewish population, they were highly visible in oppressing the Poles.

Thousands of Poles, for the most part civilians and soldiers, perished at the hands—not of the Soviet invaders but—of their fellow citizens in the bloody month of September 1939 alone. A particularly heinous crime occurred in Brzostowica Mała near Grodno where neighbour-on-neighbour violence, which would escalate dramatically during the war, was pioneered. As many fifty Poles were tortured and butchered in a paroxysm of violence by a Jewish-led band of local pro-Communist Jews and Belorussians *before* the arrival of the Red Army. Moreover, the tragedy that befell the Poles at the hands of their non-Polish neighbours in the Eastern Borderlands in September 1939, where crimes were not only tolerated but incited by the Soviets, and therefore carried out with impunity, was a precursor to the events that ensued when the this area was seized by Nazi Germany in June and July 1941. Astute observers of the situation on the ground, the Germans actively supported a similar policy, this time directing it against Communist collaborators and Jews.

The Soviet authorities moved to legalize the excesses committed against Poles in September and October 1939. In March the following year, the Council of People's Commissars pronounced that Soviet law was in force (in so-called Western Belorussia) only from November 2, 1939, that is, from the moment of the formal incorporation of seized Polish territory into the Soviet Union. Only crimes committed against the "working people" before that date were punishable. At the same time, it was forbidden to impose criminal sanctions on the "working people" for deeds "provoked by their exploiters and committed in the course of class struggle." The roles of the victims and culprits were reversed.

It is widely recognized by historians that the portrait of Polish-Jewish relations presented in Holocaust historiography is seriously flawed. Writing in the *New York Review of Books*, Columbia University

historian István Deák stated authoritatively: "No issue in Holocaust literature is more burdened by misunderstanding, mendacity, and sheer racial prejudice than that of Polish-Jewish relations during World War II." This is doubly compounded in the case of the eastern half of Poland, which was occupied by the Soviet Union in 1939–1941 and where the tone of Jewish-Polish relations was set by the Jews.

For fifty years it was impossible in Communist Poland to write objectively about the Soviet invasion, and silence surrounded the fate of the Polish population under Soviet rule. Abroad, Polish political émigrés were consumed with more pressing matters and focused on the deeds of the principal perpetrators of Poland's wartime tragedy—the Germans and Soviets. Except for memoirs and archival records, most of which were unpublished, the deeds of local collaborators were rarely mentioned. Even with the political changes that took place in Poland in 1989 no concerted effort was made to collect and publish such materials.

This state of affairs played into the hands of Holocaust historians who, preoccupied with Jewish victimization under the Nazi regime, ignored, glossed over or simply denied the fact of Jewish collaboration with the Soviet invaders of Poland both in 1939–1941, and again from 1944 onward. Indeed, in recent years we have witnessed a concerted effort to relegate Jewish misconduct to the realm of unfounded perception on the part of the Poles that has little or no basis in fact. Thus a serious void or, worse still, denial about these "thorny" issues permeates Western scholarship; at most we find apologetics. In a dramatic reversal from his earlier scholarship, Jan T. Gross has now discouted the notion of Jewish collaboration with the Soviet occupation regime, arguing instead that it was the Poles who "broadly collaborated with the Germans, up to and including participation in the exterminatory war against the Jews." Other Jewish historians, such as Omer Bartov, are even more strident in their denial: "As a myth, the tale of Jewish collaboration with the Communists is as fascinating as the older and still potent canard of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. As history, it is simply false." The most disturbing trend in that scholarship has been to focus on the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 and play down to the point of dismissing or obscuring the brutal Soviet occupation that preceded that event.

Even compelling reports of Jewish collaboration with the Soviet occupiers found in key documents from that period are ignored or discounted out of hand, such as the charge levelled by the legendary Polish courier, Jan Karski, who was made an Honorary Citizen of Israel for his role in warning the West about the Holocaust and cannot be accused of harbouring hostility toward the Jews. Writing in early 1940, at a time when the mass deportations of Poles were not yet underway, Karski reported:

> The Jews have taken over the majority of the political and administrative positions. But what is worse, they are denouncing Poles, especially students and politicians (to the secret police), are directing the work of the (Communist) militia from behind the scenes, are unjustly denigrating conditions in Poland before the war. Unfortunately, one must say that these incidents are very frequent, and more common than incidents which demonstrate loyalty toward Poles or sentiment toward Poland.

A Jewish woman from Wilno concurred with that assessment when she wrote during the war:

> Under Bolshevik rule an anti-Jewish current grew significantly. In large measure the Jews themselves were responsible for this … At every turn they mocked Poles, yelled out that their Poland was no more … The Jewish Communists dallied with the patriotic sentiments of Poles, denounced their illegal conversations, pointed out Polish officers and former government officials, freely worked for the NKVD, and took part in arrests. … The Bolsheviks on the whole treated Jews favourably, had complete faith in them and were confident of their devoted sympathy and trust. For that reason they put Jews in all of the leading and influential positions which they would not entrust to Poles who formerly occupied them.

It must be remembered that, by and large, the perpetrators were ordinary Jews and those they targeted were not guilty of any specific wrongdoing. Soon thereafter Jewish collaborators, in their positions as local officials, police, and NKVD agents, played a key role in populating the Gulag with their Polish neighbours. They identified them and put them on lists of "class enemies"; they arrested them and evicted them from their homes; and they helped to dispatch them by cattle car to the far reaches of the Soviet Union. While certainly not universal, this was by no means a marginal phenomenon, and, given the lack of condemnation of such activities by Jewish leaders, Poles were entitled to assume thatin fact it reflected a widespread attitude.

This book argues that the role of Soviet collaborators was analogous to that played by the German fifth column. Indeed, as we shall see, the similarities are many and striking. The role of Jews as collaborators and, more frequently, as bystanders to the tragedy of Poles, however, was never mentioned in Western literature. This notion is widely held to be incompatible with the entrenched and comforting view that the Jews, who were the primary victims of the war, could only be victims. The fact that the deeds of the Soviets were overshadowed by the incomparable Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazi regime, about which there is an enormous awareness, also played a large part in shaping our view of the historical record.

Another factor that came into play was that in the West, for a variety of reasons, the crimes of Communism were downplayed or shrugged off as less important than those of the Nazi regime. There was nothing remotely similar to the vast array of historical works, memoirs, popular literature, journalistic writings, documentaries, films, educational programs, and even institutions that deal with the Holocaust. A fuller appreciation of the enormity of communist crimes is just beginning to make inroads into the consciousness of the West with the publication of books such as *The Black Book of Communism.* And, as in the case of Nazi German crimes, Soviet crimes could not have taken place without large numbers of collaborators coming forward in the conquered nations.

The present work draws on, but is not restricted to, the efforts of scholars who have treated the topic of Jewish-Polish relations under the Soviet occupation. These include: Jan Tomasz Gross, Norman Davies, Ben-Cion Pinchuk, Dov Levin, Keith Sword, Ryszard Szawłowski, Tadeusz Piotrowski, Bogdan Musiał, Marek Wierzbicki, Tomasz Strzembosz, Jerzy Robert Nowak, and Andrzej Żbikowski. Altogether, more

than 800 accounts—a significant number of them Jewish—provide the evidentiary basis for the conclusions contained in this study. These accounts are representative of what occurred in hundreds of cities and towns in Eastern Poland.

While the gathering of accounts is still in its infancy, like many aspects of wartime Polish-Jewish relations, a fairly clear outline emerges of some aspects of Jewish conduct vis-à-vis Poles under Soviet rule. It is an immensely important story that has never before been told and one that redefines the history of wartime Polish-Jewish relations. There is overwhelming evidence that Jews played an important, at times pivotal role in arresting hundreds of Polish officers and officials in the aftermath of the September 1939 campaign and in deporting thousands of Poles to the Gulag. Collaboration in the destruction of the Polish state, and in the killing of its officials and military, constituted de facto collaboration and treason on behalf of a foreign power and aided, both directly and indirectly the two totalitarian powers, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, which shared a common, criminal purpose and agenda in 1939–1945. As such, it is an integral and important aspect of the study of wartime collaboration.

In some respects, Jewish conduct under the Soviet regime mirrored and at times foreshadowed and even provoked similar conduct toward Jews on the part of some Poles vis-à-vis the Jews under German rule—a point that is repeatedly stressed throughout this publication. *It is important, however, to bear in mind that such collaboration, although a force to be reckoned with, was unrepresentative of the overall behaviour of both communities. It was the work of a small minority, but given the dire consequences, one cannot turn a blind eye to this phenomenon.* Apart from collaborators drawn from the margins of society, there were also Jews who assisted Poles (many examples of such help are also cited in the annotations), and, far more often, those who stood by for various reasons (fear, helplessness, indifference, etc.)—the so-called bystanders. Neither the Poles nor the Jews as a collective can be charged with complicity in the atrocities designed and carried out by the Nazi and Soviet regimes.

Hopefully, *Neighbours on the Eve of the Holocaust* will help to reinforce the gradual and painstaking evolution that has been taking place among some probing scholars in recent years in assessing wartime Polish-Jewish relations in a much more balanced way. As noted by István Deák,

> The Polish Jews were killed by the Germans and not by the Poles, and several million Poles were also killed, in their case by both Germany and the Soviet Union. It is true that some Poles made life very difficult for Jews in the interwar era, and that some Polish people helped the German Nazis to hunt down Jews or hunted them down on their own. But it is also true that, between 1939 and 1941 in Soviet-occupied eastern Poland as well as after 1944 in all of Poland, some Jews in Soviet or Polish communist police uniform hunted down Christian Poles. Poles accused and often still accuse the Jews of being Communists at the service of a monstrous foreign power; Jews accused and often still accuse the Poles of being anti-Semites and fascists. Yet the criminals in both camps were only a minority; most people were victims. It is wrong to strictly separate the two groups and view them as opposed to each other when thousands of Jews served in the Polish army, and when many Jews considered themselves both good Poles and good Jews.

With the publication of *Neighbours on the Eve of the Holocaust,* the history of Polish-Jewish relations during the Second World War can never again revert to the simplistic patterns of the past, which focused exclusively on Polish conduct against the backdrop of Jewish victimization. It is safe to say, however, that there will be no improvement in understanding Polish-Jewish wartime relations until the events that occurred in Eastern Poland under the occupation of Hitler's erstwhile ally, the Soviet Union, become part of the Holocaust and World War II curriculum in North American schools.

Earlier versions of this much expanded work can be found in the following publications: *Kielce—July 4, 1946: Background, Context and Events* (Toronto and Chicago: The Polish Educational Foundation in North America, 1996), 127–36; and *The Story of Two Shtetls, Brańsk and Ejszyszki: An Overview of Polish-Jewish Relations in Northeastern Poland during World War II* (Toronto and Chicago: The Polish Educational Foundation in North America, 1998), Part Two, 173–230. The publisher would be grateful for additional accounts, and corrections, which should be forwarded to: CPC/Toronto (Obrona), 206 Beverley Street, Toronto, Ontario M5T 1Z3 (Canada).

CHAPTER ONE

Arrests, Executions and Deportations

Almost 13.5 million people resided in the eastern half of Poland seized by the Soviet Union in 1939. Of this number, approximately 5 million were ethnic Poles. There were also some 5 million Ukrainians, perhaps 2 million Belorussians, about 1.3 million Jews (not including at least 200,000–300,000 Jewish refugees from the German zone), and much smaller groups of Russians, Germans, Lithuanians, and Czechs. But the terror and repressions that ensued did not strike at these various groups in equal measure. Moreover, collaborators from among the national minorities, very often Jews, played a prominent role in the assault on the Poles, the first and primary victims of the Soviet invaders.

With the Soviet takeover of Eastern Poland in September 1939, there followed widespread arrests of Polish officials, and police and military personnel. Some 250,000 Polish soldiers were taken as prisoners of war. As of December that year, about 40,000 of them remained in camps under the watchful eye of the NKVD (National Commissariat for Internal Affairs, i.e., the Soviet state security organ and predecessor of the KGB). Several thousand Poles, mostly soldiers, captured in the September campaign were simply executed on the spot. Between September 1939 and March 1941, according to Soviet sources, 92,500 Polish citizens were arrested in Polish territories incorporated into the Ukrainian and Belorussian Soviet Republics. By the end of June 1941, the number of people arrested had grown to 108,000. The largest group, by far, were ethnic Poles, who accounted for almost 45 percent of all those arrested. Ukrainians and Jews each accounted for about 22 percent of prisoners, and Belorussians 7.5 percent. (These figures are in addition to the deportations discussed below.)

Some 14,600 Polish officers and officials, who had been seized in September and October 1939 and held in prisoner-of-war camps in Kozelsk, Starobelsk, and Ostashkov (transliterated as Kozielsk, Starobielsk, and Ostaszkow in Polish), were murdered in mass executions in Katyn, Kharkov, and Kalinin (now Tver), respectively, in April and May of 1940. With the release of Soviet documents to the Polish government in October 1992, it is now known that on March 5, 1940, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party, with Stalin's blessing, also ordered the execution of some 11,000 Poles (mostly prewar officials and functionaries) held in prisons in Polish territories incorporated into Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Belorussia. The Soviets managed to execute 21,900 of the approximately 25,000 persons condemned to death. Non-Poles were only exceptionally affected by this measure.

That Poles were the primary targets of Soviet repression—certainly in the initial phases—is undeniable: Soviet documents indicate that over 97 percent of the prisoners slated for execution in Eastern Poland in the early part of 1940 were ethnic Poles. Of the prisoners of war interned at Kozelsk, Starobelsk, and Ostashkov, about 95 percent were ethnic Poles. Independent studies by the Katyn Family (an organization of

family members of victims) concluded that ethnic Poles constituted 98.1 percent of the prisoners in these camps. A further indication of who was being targeted in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland is the ethnic breakdown for prisoners of war from the Polish army interned in the labour camp in Równe, Volhynia. In April 1940, of the 12,707 internees, 78.7 percent were Poles, 17.4 percent Belorussians, 2.1 percent Ukrainians, and 1.1 percent Jews.

Between October 1939 and June 1941 the Soviets exiled hundreds of thousands of civilians from Eastern Poland to the interior of the Soviet Union (mainly to Siberia, Kazakhstan and Arkhangelsk). There they ended up in penal- or forced-labour camps or were dumped into remote settlements and (less frequently) kolkhozes. Based on the NKVD's own figures, a total of between 330,000 and 340,000 civilians were deported in four large waves of deportations in 1940–1941. If other round-ups and categories of people are counted, the total number of those deported and arrested rises, by the most conservative of estimates, to between 400,000 and 500,000.

The breakdown for the three massive waves of deportations carried out in the first half of 1940 is as follows: at least 140,000 persons were deported on February 10 (of whom almost 82 percent were ethnic Poles, with Ukrainians and Belorussians each accounting for around 8 percent); 60,000 on April 13 (again mostly Poles); and 80,000 on June 29 of that year. The first wave comprised above all interwar settlers, both military and civilian, and foresters and their families; the second wave targeted the families of those who had been arrested and deported earlier on, such as soldiers, policemen and "counter-revolutionaries"; the third wave consisted of refugees, mostly Jews, from German-occupied Poland. A final large-scale deportation of civilians took place the following year (1941), on May 21 (from "Western Ukraine"), June 14 (from the Baltic States), and June 19 (from "Western Belorussia"). The last of these deportations was cut short by the surprise German invasion on June 22. At least 40,000 people were affected at that time, including almost 4,000 Poles deported from Polish territories incorporated into Lithuania.

(The statistics for civilian deportees cited above are based on Soviet records released after the collapse of the Soviet Union and may understate their true number—they should be treated as the *minimum* number of documented casualties. Polish wartime estimates ran higher and counted a million or more civilian deportees: 220,000 in February, 320,000 in April, and 240,000 in June 1940, and between 200,000 and 300,000 in May–June 1941.)

Various other deportations, smaller in scale, resulted in the expulsion of an additional 50,000 civilians. Nor do these statistics include some 22,500 deported prisoners of war or the 80,000–90,000 people arrested for political reasons and detained in prisons in Eastern Poland, about half of whom were eventually deported to forced labour camps. While it is impossible to compute with certainty the number of Polish citizens who suffered deportation and other forms of repression, after an extensive analysis of all available sources, historian Daniel Boćkowski estimates that approximately 750,000–780,000 Polish citizens found themselves in the Soviet interior as a result of the war.

The harshest deportation by far was the one carried out in the winter of 1940 when temperatures fell to minus 40°C. Entire families were rounded up and driven to nearby train stations. People, especially

children, froze in the unheated cattle cars onto which they were loaded and many died from diseases. After arriving at the places of their forced resettlement in the dead of winter, in one settlement half of the deportees fell sick and ten percent of the population died in the space of one month.

Jan Tomasz Gross describes the harsh conditions in which the deportations took place.

> The population of Soviet-occupied Poland was unprepared for the cruelty of the deportations. People were usually awakened in the early morning hours by squads of soldiers and local militiamen, given little time to pack, and quickly driven to the nearest railway station. There, freight trains awaited them. They froze in unheated cattle cars in February [1940] and suffocated in the June heat four months later. They were locked in for weeks with only meager rations of food and water, with a hole in the car's floor for all facilities. Men, women and children of all ages were mixed together. Because even the sick and aged, as well as newborn infants, were put on the trains—there were no exemptions from the deportation order—many died, and corpses traveled with the living before being discarded at some railway stop …
>
> But the horrors of the journey were only a prelude to the misery of everyday life that awaited the deportees at their destination—filth and overcrowded living quarters, hunger, cold, disease, and slave labor.

Many of the civilian deportees, especially children—perhaps as many as one quarter of the total number—perished as a result of harsh conditions en route and in exile in the Gulag. The deportations were based in large measure on lists compiled by collaborators from among the local population, principally Jews and Ukrainians. These minorities, in their role as militia and in other official capacities, also helped to identify and track down their neighbours who were slated for deportation.

Although the later waves of deportations (from June 1940 on) included many Jews (around 70,000) and smaller numbers of Ukrainians (around 25,000), Belorussians (around 20,000), and Lithuanians, an absolute majority of those exiled to the Gulag—some 250,000 of the approximately 350,000 civilian deportees accounted for in Soviet sources—were ethnic Poles. (As noted earlier, however, Poles constituted an overall minority in Eastern Poland.)

The vast majority of Jews deported to the Soviet interior were not targeted because of their political activities or their ethnic or religious status. The largest group were, in fact, some 43,000 refugees from the German-occupied areas of Poland. They accounted for approximately 62 percent of Jewish civilian deportees. Thus only a small portion of the estimated 200,000–300,000 Jewish refugees from the German zone fell victim to Soviet repressions. Many of them had registered for "repatriation" to the German zone at the German offices set up for this purpose, in accordance with the terms of the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty. At the time, the Jews who registered for "repatriation" were not impressed by conditions in the Soviet zone and were no longer terrified at the prospect of living under German occupation. Returning to their homes and families and safeguarding their economic interests was uppermost in their minds. (The alternative of taking out Soviet citizenship, it was believed, would result in

losing the property left behind in the German zone.) Some 1,500 Jews were allowed to return to the German sector before the Germans put a stop to this charade.

Quite unexpectedly, those Jews who had lined up to register later faced deportation to the Soviet interior since the Soviets had taken careful note of them. It should be stressed that the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany were firm allies at that time and that the Jews who indicated their readiness to return to the German zone had no inkling that they would later become politically suspect. Ironically, since the vast majority of Jews deported to the Soviet interior survived the war and this proved to be their salvation from the Holocaust, pro-Soviet propaganda turned this unanticipated and unintended consequence into a "rescue" activity on behalf of endangered Jews.

Many Jews were arrested for illegal border crossings and for engaging in illicit trade and other shady activities, which assumed enormous proportions in the Soviet zone, and suffered deportation on those accounts. A much smaller number of Jews, the well-to-do capitalists and prewar political and social activists, were labelled "class enemies" and deported for that reason. Occasionally, Jewish Communists who fled to the Soviet zone found that their love for the Soviet Union was unrequited and faced deportation to the Soviet interior, despite their anti-Polish leanings.

> My uncle, Stanislaw [Stanisław] Lubelski, was a teacher, a great communist. He took his son Tadzio and his nephew, the son of my other aunt Rosalia (Rozia [Rózia]), and he stayed in Lwow [Lwów]. He studied Russian. He was going to be the number one citizen of Russia. The Russians came in the night and sent him to Siberia … Just like that—a communist! …
>
> My uncle Lubelski was not only in the Party. He was active, a big communist, and he would do anything possible against the Polish government. He was really something. He turned all the students into communists.

Jews who actually engaged in underground political activities or open religious-based protests directed against the Soviet state were a rarity. Indeed, Jewish memoirs referring to that period underline that virtually all political activity ceased.

Wartime estimates of Jews constituting 30 percent or more of the deportees appear to be exaggerated. On the whole, Jewish deportees, especially in the first two waves of deportations, comprised only a tiny fraction of Polish ones. Moreover, only a small number of the Jewish deportees were prewar residents of the former Eastern Polish territories: the majority were refugees from central Poland. In the town of Kałusz near Stanisławów, for example, reportedly only two indigenous Jews, out of a population of 6,000, were exiled. Local Jews were more likely to have made their way to the Soviet interior because of the military draft or as volunteers for industrial labour. The latter category also included many refugees from the German zone. Since the vast majority of Jews exiled to the Soviet interior were young men and women, and since they were not deported in the depth of winter as entire Polish families were, their mortality rate appears to have been considerably smaller than that of the Poles.

Political prisoners filled to overflowing the jails of Eastern Poland, which held at least 100,000 prisoners at various times, and many thousands of them perished during the Soviet occupation. Soviet documents, made available to researchers after the collapse of the Soviet Union, confirm that in June and July 1941, on the eve of the German invasion, at least 10,000 political prisoners were massacred in jails in Eastern Poland, often with unspeakable cruelty. Thousands more prisoners (30,000–40,000 by one count), many of whom were later executed, were evacuated with the retreating Soviet army.

Understandably, Polish public opinion did not differentiate between cooperation with the Nazi and Soviet invaders: both of these enemies worked hand-in-hand in the destruction of the Polish state and its people, and both were regarded as equally reprehensible. Although many Jews apparently saw the Soviet Union as the lesser of two evils, this was by no means a universal sentiment, as some apologists would have it. Many Jews did not know what to expect either from the Germans or the Soviets when they opted for one over the other, and those who openly cheered for the Soviets did more than opt, they welcomed the invaders of their country. As a resident of Łosice recalled,

> There was lots of confusion as to who was really going to occupy our town. At first we were occupied by the Germans, then the Soviet army arrived, and red flags were flying all over. Finally, the Germans came back and stayed. During those few weeks of uncertainty, people, especially Jews, were going back and forth across the Bug River, not far to the east. They couldn't decide which side was the lesser evil. Most Jews, however, including my immediately family, stayed on the German side.

It must be borne in mind that Nazi Germany did not implement the "Final Solution" until after Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941. In the meantime, the Soviets had also struck a devastating blow to Jewish communal life and organizations in Eastern Poland, and tens of thousands of Jews also deported to the Gulag.

Many Jews who had come under Soviet rule, even those who were severe critics of prewar Poland and openly welcomed their country's downfall, sooner or later came to the belated realization, in the words of one survivor, that "it was still better to be a Jew in democratic Poland than to live under the Soviets in equal fear with everyone else." Leon Feiner, who had spent some time in a prewar Polish prison for subversive activities, was imprisoned by the Soviets when he fled for "safety" from the Germans to the Soviet zone of occupation. His friend Bernard Goldstein, a Bundist activist, barely recognized Feiner after his release and return to German-occupied Warsaw:

> I could hardly believe my eyes. I remembered Feiner as a tall aristocratic man, whose graying hair was the only hint of his fifty-eight years. Though he was a busy, prosperous lawyer, he had always managed to find time for skiing and mountain climbing to keep him in the best physical condition. The man with sunken cheeks who stood before me was old and starved. What had happened to his healthy elegance?
>
> He smiled wryly at me. "I have 'recovered' during the last few weeks on the Aryan side. You should have seen me when I arrived from the Soviet zone."

> In his quiet, deliberate way he told me the story of his experiences during the long months in the Soviet prison at Lida.
>
> "I was in the Polish Punishment Camp of Kartuz Bereza [Bereza Kartuska] a long time, but that cannot even be compared to what I lived through under our 'comrades.' They cross-examined me for nights on end. They insulted me as a 'spy.' I told them I was a lawyer and had a long record of defending Communists in Polish courts. They laughed and called me a counterrevolutionary and a fascist.
>
> "We received hardly any food. Often in our hunger we sucked our fingers. We got thin as sticks, dirty, and lousy. It is hard for me to say it, but what saved us is that the Nazis drew close to Lida. The Soviet guards did not even do us the kindness of unlocking the cell doors before they ran away. We had to break out ourselves, before the Nazis took the town. It took weeks for Fishgrund and me to reach Warsaw on foot. We arrived in terrible shape, barefoot, bloody, looking too far gone even to pass as beggars."

Jews also came forward in droves to join General Anders' Polish Army and to be "repatriated" to Soviet-dominated Poland in 1944–1948 rather than remain under direct Soviet rule. Joining the Polish army or "repatriating" to Poland was, in most cases, seen as an interim solution, a way out of the Gulag and a stepping stone to Palestine (where many Jews deserted from the Polish army) or the West. Moreover, the "transformation" was by no means universal and many Jews continued to applaud the benefits of Soviet rule right to the end. But that ultimate awareness (for many, but certainly not for all) is one that skips very important steps in the evolution of Jewish attitudes and in the analysis of what transpired in Eastern Poland in 1939–1941. A significant portion of the Jewish population, with the passive acquiescence of the vast majority, had by that time openly embraced Soviet rule and declared themselves to be enemies of Poland. News of this reached the rest of Poland and made a strong impression there.

In an exchange with Jewish-American publicist Abraham Brumberg, British historian Norman Davies was one of the first Western historians to deal with, among other topics, the Soviet invasion of Eastern Poland. Davies begins his discourse in the *New York Review of Books* (April 9, 1987) with rather obvious statements of principle:

> On Polish-Jewish questions, my position is straightforward. I think that they can best be understood by taking a critical stance toward the claims of both interested parties, and by treating the problems of prewar Poland's divided society in terms of the mutual experiences and mutual antagonisms of both sides. I see no virtue in limiting oneself to the recriminations of one side against the other. … there were, and are, two sides to Polish-Jewish antipathies. Also, one must try to relate the political currents of Polish Jewry to the general trends of the day, and not to pretend that the Jews were somehow exempt from the full range of political attitudes and opinions which affected all other groups.

Professor Davies continues:

What I wrote, and can confirm, amounts to this: firstly, that among the collaborators who came forward to assist the Soviet security forces in dispatching huge numbers of innocent men, women, and children to distant exile and probable death, there was a disproportionate number of Jews; and secondly, that news of the circumstances surrounding the deportations helped to sour Polish-Jewish relations in other parts of occupied Poland.

I might have added, for Mr. Brumberg's comfort, that the majority of Polish Jews (like the great majority of Poles, Belorussians, Ukrainians and Lithuanians) did *not* sympathize with Russian communism, did *not* welcome the Soviet invasion, and did *not* collaborate with the deportations. … None of which alters the original contention. Among those persons, who to their discredit *did* collaborate, there were "many Jews." …

As an eyewitness to the events in eastern Poland in 1939–1941, [Brumberg] has reported that the charge of Jewish collaboration is "particularly obnoxious" and that the collaborators only included "small groups of procommunist sympathizers." Regrettably, without disparaging either his memory or his eyesight, one has to report that almost all other witnesses disagree with him. Thousands of survivors now in the West, and scores of published memoirs tell a different story. Among the informers and collaborators, as in the personnel of the Soviet security police at the time, the high percentage of Jews was striking. One could check the following accounts: Jan and Irena Gross (1983), Anatol Krakowiecki (1950), Aleksander Blum (1980), Aleksander Wat (1977), Klara Mirska (1980), Ola Watowa (1984), Marek Celt (1986), or the collective work, *Moje zderzenie z bolszewikami we wrześniu 1939 roku* ("My Clash with the Bolsheviks in September 1939"), and very many more.

These reports about the conduct of Jews do not necessarily make pleasant reading, especially when one reflects on the appalling fate of those same Jewish communities following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet-occupied zone in June 1941. But one should not for that reason discount them, or try to read history backward.

Mr. Brumberg is fond of quoting a Home Army Report of September 1941, signed by the commanding office of the AK, General Grot-Rowecki, and containing the famous sentence, "Please accept it as an established fact that the overwhelming majority of people in the country are anti-Semitically disposed" (*Przygniatająca większość kraju jest nastawiona antysemicko*). Mistranslated by Mr. Brumberg,[1] the quotation takes on a new slant, and might seem to imply either that Polish attitudes were based on fixed prejudice, or even that the Poles approved of the Nazis' genocidal policies. Significantly, and very conveniently, Mr. Brumberg keeps quiet about the second half of the quotation. The original text of the report, in describing the factors influencing Polish opinion at the time, goes on to say three things: firstly, that virtually nobody approved of German actions; secondly, that Nazi persecution of the Jews was causing a backlash of sympathy; and thirdly, that pro-Jewish sympathies were inhibited by knowledge of Jewish activities in the Soviet zone. …

[1] Professor Davies explains: "Mr. Brumberg's mistranslation reads, 'The overwhelming majority of the country is anti-Semitic,' wrongly implying that anti-Semitism was a fixed attribute of the Polish population. Grot-Rowecki, however, used the phrase *'nastawiona antysemicko,'* which is rather different, implying a *nastawienie,* an 'attitude,' 'adjustment,' 'disposition,' or 'inclination' that can change according to circumstances."

One might equally recall the report written [transmitted] in February 1940 by Jan Karski—one of those fearless Polish couriers who kept London in touch with occupied Poland, and who was subsequently decorated in Israel for his attempts to warn the West about the realities of the Holocaust. [The portions in square brackets were omitted in the English translation relied on by Davies.—*M.P.*]

"The Situation of the Jews on Territories Occupied by the USSR"

The Jews here feel at home, not just because they are not humiliated or persecuted, but because their smartness and adaptability has won them a certain measure of political and economic advantage.

The Jews are entering the political cells. They have taken over the majority of political and administrative positions, and are playing an important role in the labor unions, in the schools, and above all in commerce, both legal and illegal [loansharking and profiteering, illegal trade, contraband, foreign currency exchange, liquor, immoral pursuits, pimping and procurement] …

Polish opinion considers that Jewish attitudes to the Bolsheviks are favourable. It is universally believed that the Jews betrayed Poland and the Poles, that they are all communists at heart, and that they went over to the Bolsheviks with flags waving. Indeed, in most towns, the Jews did *welcome the Bolsheviks with bouquets, with speeches and with declarations of allegiance and so on.*

One should make certain distinctions, however. Obviously the Jewish communists have reacted enthusiastically to the Bolsheviks. … The Jewish proletariat, petty traders and artisans, whose position has seen a structural improvement, and who formerly had to bear the indifference or the excesses of the Polish element, have reacted positively, too. That is hardly surprising.

But what is worse, Jews are denouncing Poles [especially students and politicians] (to the secret police), are directing the work of the (communist) militia from behind the scenes, are unjustly denigrating conditions in Poland before the war. Unfortunately, one must say that these incidents are very frequent, [and more common than incidents which demonstrate loyalty toward Poles or sentiment toward Poland].

The *Yad Vashem* archive in Israel, too, provides detailed substantiation of the same picture. "The Jews welcomed the Red Army with joy. The young people spent all their days and evenings with the soldiers." In Grodno, "all sorts of appointments were filled predominantly with Jews, and the Soviet authorities entrusted them, too, with the top positions." [In Żółkiew, "The Russians rely primarily on Jews in filling positions …"] In Lwów, "I must admit that the majority of positions in the Soviet agencies have been taken by Jews." A Jewish observer to the pro-Soviet demonstrations in Lwów related, "Whenever a political march, or protest meeting, or some other sort of joyful event took place, the visual effect was unambiguous—Jews." In Wielkie Oczy, the Jewish doctor recalled how local Jewish youths having formed themselves into a "*komsomol*" toured the countryside smashing Catholic shrines. The references can be found in a recent study of the Soviet deportations from eastern Poland by J. T. Gross and I. Gross, *W czterdziestym nas Matko na Sybir zesłali…: Polska a Rosja 1939–42.*

> In Pińsk, where the population was over 90 percent Jewish, young Jews built an "*Arc de Triomphe.*"
>
> The purpose here, of course, is not to demonstrate what one hopes would be taken for granted, namely, that Jews given the chance will behave as well or as badly as anyone else. The purpose is simply to show that the marked increase in anti-Semitism in occupied Poland in 1939–1941 was linked to Jewish conduct. To put the perspective of many Poles emotively, Jews were seen to be dancing on Poland's grave.
>
> Naturally, there is more to the story than that. Objectively speaking, there was no reason for Polish Jews as a whole to react to Poland's defeat in the way that most Poles did, nor for them to share Polish feeling that collaborating with the invaders was in itself an act of disloyalty. Nor should one forget that the prevalence of Jews in the Soviet organs of oppression did not stop the Soviets, once established, from devastating Jewish life in the Soviet zone. The Jewish communes, which had flourished under Polish rule, were peremptorily abolished. The Jewish middle class was reduced to penury. Hebrew schools, Zionist clubs, all independent Jewish organizations were closed down overnight. Conditions were so good that thousands of Jewish refugees swarmed westward toward the Nazi zone, passing swarms of other refugees fleeing in the opposite direction. Gross even reports one incident, where a visiting Nazi commission was greeted by crowds of Jews chanting "*Heil Hitler*" in the hope of getting permission to cross the frontier. And on the frontier bridge over the River Bug, they were met by a Nazi officer shouting, "Jews, where on earth are you going? We are going to kill you."
>
> All Polish citizens shared in the confusion. Many fled from west to east to escape the Nazis. Many fled from east to west to escape the Soviets. Many, quite literally, went around in circles. …
>
> The hopeless predicament of such people, trapped between Hitler and Stalin, eloquently illustrates the predicament of Eastern Europe as a whole. Poles, Jews, Ukrainians, and all other peoples of the region were caught in the same double bind, overtaken not just by one occupation, but by two. Eastern Europe lay astride the battleground of the two greatest tyrannies the world has yet seen; and the full horror of its fate can never be comprehended unless events on either side of the dividing line are related to each other.

Some Jewish observers also noted that the attitude of Poles toward Jews, which was rather favourable in the early months of the war, changed dramatically as reports about the behaviour of the Jews in the eastern part of Poland occupied by the Soviets reached the German occupation zone. While overlooking the much larger pro-Soviet elements among the Jews, Isaiah Trunk leveled harsh criticism against the Jewish Communists.

> At the time of the of the Soviet annexation, some Jewish Communists had behaved in a tactless and even treacherous manner, indulging in triumphant greetings, infiltration into the Soviet occupation apparatus, and informing to the NKVD on regional Polish and Jewish bourgeois and Socialist leaders. In addition, the Jewish population generally welcomed the Soviet occupation … These facts were portrayed to the Polish population by returning refugees …

Polish historians were slow to amass the extensive documentation—spread over countless sources, published and unpublished—which backed Norman Davies' views, which further played into the syndrome of denial on the part of Holocaust historians. For those familiar with those materials, however, there could be no doubt that his assessment was accurate, penetrating and balanced. The hundreds of testimonies gathered in this study amply attest to that amply. By and large, Davies' penetrating observations are ignored by historians writing about this topic in the West. Rather than to turn to authoritative primary sources of Polish, Soviet, and even those of Jewish provenance, they choose instead to rely on secondary literature which is largely dated and often skewed, and compound matters by using the evidence very selectively.

CHAPTER TWO

Jews Greet the Soviet Invaders

The purpose of this compilation is not simply to present evidence for the widespread phenomenon of throngs of Jews, often dressed in their best attire for the occasion, avidly greeting the Soviet invaders of Poland in September 1939. Jewish accounts about such pro-Soviet outbursts are legion, as are Polish accounts. Many of them attest to the boundless and uncritical enthusiasm for the new regime that consumed large segments of the Jewish population. That, after all, is not the crux of the Polish case. What is disconcerting is that these manifestations were generally accompanied by declarations of loyalty to the Soviet Union and open and flagrant displays of anti-Polish sentiments and conduct.

In ***Wilno***,

> The Red Army entered … early on the morning of Tuesday, 19 September 1939, to an enthusiastic welcome by Vilna's Jewish residents, in sharp contrast to the Polish population's reserve and even hostility. Particular ardour was displayed by leftist groups and their youthful members, who converged on the Red Army tank columns bearing sincere greetings and flowers.

According to another Jewish eyewitness from Wilno,

> It is hard to describe the emotion that swept me as I saw in the street, across from our gate, a Russian tank bearing grinning young men with a blazing red star on their berets. As the machines came to a halt, the people crowded around. Somebody shouted, "Long live the Soviet government!" and everyone cheered. … You could hardly find a Gentile in that crowd. … Many people did not stop and consider what this regime would bring in its wake. … everyone greeted the Russians unanimously, as they would the Messiah.

Israeli historian Dov Levin writes:

> Various accounts attest to the joyous welcome that the Red Army received almost everywhere. When the Jews of ***Kowel*** (in Wolhynia [sic]) were informed that the Red Army was approaching the town, they "celebrated all night." When the Red Army actually entered Kowel, "the Jews greeted [it] with indescribable enthusiasm." …
>
> In ***Baranowicze***, "People kissed the soldiers' dusty boots. … Children ran to the parks, picked the autumn flowers, and showered the soldiers with them. … Red flags were found in the blink of an eye, and the entire city was bedecked in red."

> The town of Kobryn [***Kobryń***, in Polesia] was awash in red flags, which local Communists had prepared by removing the white stripe from the two-color Polish flag. The cheering crowd scattered leaflets castigating the fascist [sic] Polish regime and lauding the Red Army and its augury of liberation. In Ciechanowice [***Ciechanowiec***], a band of Jewish Communists erected an "arch of triumph" bedecked with posters bearing general greetings and messages such as "Long Live the Soviet Regime." The Jews of Rozhinoy (Rozana or Ruzhany) [***Różana***] treated the day of the Soviet occupation as a religious festival, greeting each other with *mazel tov*.
>
> …the sight of the Jews of Janow [***Janów Poleski***], greeting the Red Army in their prayer shawls, was something that had [sic] many of the Jewish-born Soviet troops had certainly never before beheld.

In the largely Jewish small town of ***Wiszniew***,

> the entire town came to greet [the Soviet troops] with flowers in their hands and everyone was very excited. At the center of the market, a stage was built and the representative of the Jews, Yakov Hirsch Alishkevitch, along with a few local Christians, made excited speeches. At the end of Yakov's speech, he said, "Long live the Soviet Union!"

A frenzy broke out in ***Nowogródek*** that could have had fatal consequences had the person fingered as an enemy of the new order in fact been a Pole:

> The city's Jews, especially the youths and children, swarmed through the streets, admiring the Red Army troops, their weapons, tanks and armoured vehicles. …
>
> … on the afternoon of the 17th [of September 1939] we heard the roar of the Soviet tanks coming from the Karelitzer Street. Some Jews cried with joy. They ran towards the tanks with flowers in their hands, blocking the way and waiting to kiss the soldiers of the Red Army. … there they noticed in the middle of the market square a tall man with a new long overcoat walking towards Mickiewicz Street. It took only one person to shout, 'There goes the judge who used to send us for years to terrible jails', for hundreds of people to start running towards him and then to rain him with blows. Red Army soldiers, seeing a riot, ran to the scene and saved the poor man. They asked him who he was, to which he replied that he was Refoel the poor cobbler who had gone home to put on his Sabbath overcoat. He was no judge but had come to welcome the Red Army.

The situation in ***Słonim*** was described by a Hebrew teacher as follows:

> … the Jewish population received the Soviet Army on its entry into the city with bread and wine, with a shower of flowers that were thrown at the soldiers, with drums and dances. ... The Slonim Jews threw themselves into the arms of the Soviet soldiers, embraced them and kissed them. The festivities continued three days. Liquor flowed like water and speeches were made in the spirit of

> Communism. Many believed that our salvation had come and the Soviet Russians were our messiah. The gentiles whispered and said: "Now the Jewish government has come."

In ***Brasław***,

> The Jews welcomed the Red Army with great joy, with flowers, bread and salt. … the draper Aharon Zeif brought out and distributed rolls of red cloth among all who wanted to make red flags.

In ***Ostrówek***, a village near Iwacewicze, in Polesia,

> Large numbers greeted the Red Army with flowers (I don't think there were any Poles there). … All the flowers from our gardens were ripped out … to meet the Russians. A well-known peddler cut off the white part of the Polish flag and the red part attached to the roof of our home.

In ***Białystok***,

> Towards evening [of September 22] the Red Army marches into a city decorated with red flags. Communal delegations greet them with flowers and speeches of welcome. Thousands of elated Bialystoker throng the streets. Jewish youths embrace Russian soldiers with great enthusiasm. On this, the holiest of nights, the culmination of the Days of Awe, orthodox Jews pack the synagogues and pray with renewed fervour.

Another Jewish account from Białystok states:

> People in the streets greeted the Red Army with great warmth. The professional associations and political organizations in the city filled the streets with red flags and flowers. The encounter was enthusiastic and friendly. Jewish youth, at that time already alienated from traditional Judaism, embraced the Russian soldiers.

In ***Horochów***, in Volhynia,

> The Jews were overjoyed. … The balconies and house fronts had been decorated with carpets and pictures of Communist leaders. A deputation of workers with radiant faces awaited their guests—their life's dream had come true.

A Jew from Warsaw who found himself in ***Łuck*** reported with a foresight that seems to have been rather rare in those times:

> The majority of the youth expressed great enthusiasm. They kissed the soldiers, climbed the tanks, they gave an ovation. Even earlier, before the Red Army had entered the town, a part of Jewish youth organized meetings and demonstrations. For us Jews it was politically very unwise that a part

of the Jewish community had a very bad attitude towards Polish society and the Polish army.

But it was not just the impressionable youth who were enthusiastic about the prospect of Soviet rule. A Polish eyewitness recorded the following scene in ***Dubno***:

> A Soviet soldier came in to the little Jewish cafe where we were sitting over a cup of tea. … He was surrounded by a group of people. The local Jews in particular looked on him with great satisfaction and caught his words greedily, translating them aloud into Polish at one. The soldier declared, of course, that the Red Army was on the march to Germany. The most interesting part of his discourse was however his accounts of the Soviet regime and of life in Russia, which we found afterwards he must have learnt by heart, since they were word for word the same as those given by every new-comer from Russia, were he soldier or civilian. Russia, according to him, was a perfect paradise on earth, where everyone was prosperous and enjoyed great freedom.
>
> 'Comrade, what would I be able to do there?' one of his hearers asked him.
>
> 'It depends on what you know, comrade, and whether you're a specialist.'
>
> 'I'm a shopkeeper.'
>
> 'Then in that case you'll at once become a commissar of a large co-operative, comrade.'
>
> 'And I? I am a workman in a bacon-factory,' another wanted to know.
>
> 'What is a bacon-factory?'
>
> 'A meat-cannery.'
>
> 'Why, as you've been a workman, comrade, you can now be commissar of a factory, or a section-superintendent.'
>
> At each answer given by the Red Army man the questioners rubbed their hands delightedly, as though they had already received their new appointments.

In ***Równe***, young Jews marched "in the streets, holding high the red flag … and singing the Communist songs." A Polish soldier who observed a pro-Communist parade led by a group of Jews in honour of the Red Army, estimated that about ninety percent of 300 people who took part were cheering Jews.

In ***Ostróg***, in a comedy of errors, a Franciscan priest dressed in a long cassock was mistaken for a Soviet commissar by Jews who set out to greet the Red Army. They bowed low before him. Local Jews with red armbands were soon swarming the streets acting as the militia.

In ***Lwów***, pro-Soviet "enthusiasts" consisting mostly of Jews and some Ukrainians greeted the Red Army as it marched into the city on September 22. Groups of young men met the Soviets on the outskirts of the city and "welcomed them with red banners, revolutionary songs and music." Red flags, made by ripping the white portion off the red and white Polish banner, draped windows and balconies and adorned buildings and gateways. In front of the Grand Theatre, an impassioned address to a Soviet tank division leader was delivered by a rabbi, who reportedly expressed the Jewish community's gratitude for the long-awaited demise of the Polish state.

Hugo Steinhaus, a renowned mathematician of Jewish origin, recalled with shame the servility of "an enormous mass" of Jews from Lwów, who "had turned out to greet the Bolsheviks adorned in red bows and

stars, so much so that it aroused laughter among the Russian officers. Others disarmed Polish officers in the streets, kissed Russian tanks and stroked their artillery."

In ***Śniatyn,***

> The townspeople organized a welcoming program in honor of the Red Army and decked the town out with bunting; seven hundred citizens marched past the Soviet headquarters, carrying red flags and crying hail and hurrah. Most of the paraders were Jews, some were Ukrainians; but there were no Poles.

In anticipation of the Soviet arrival, local Jews adorned a square in ***Borysław*** with huge portraits of Lenin, Stalin, Marx and Engels. They brought out a table which they covered with a red cloth and erected a triumphal arch which bore pro-Soviet slogans.

In ***Drohobycz***, the difference in attitude between the Polish and Jewish population was striking:

> The Jewish crowd cheered the Bolsheviks. A huge red flag was hoisted on the Town Hall and floodlit with a searchlight. The Jews put on red armbands and tried to form a kind of militia to take control of the town. …
>
> The delight of the Jews was indescribable. Some of them started making communist speeches and greeted others with uplifted fists. The Polish population, on the other hand, kept very quiet and stayed at home.

The prevailing mood was captured in a Jewish diary: "I am going from place to place, from one shtetl to another and am amazed to find true enthusiasm for the Soviet régime." Some went even further. That same diarist encountered an old Jew in a shtetl who observed, "These are Messiah's times and Stalin is the Messiah himself."

There are many accounts which attest to the fact that elderly Jews could also fall into pro-Soviet bliss. A grey-haired Jew from ***Boremel***, in Volhynia, by the name of Lerner, who had the appearance of a patriarch, when asked by a Soviet soldier how old he was, replied: "I am four-days old." "How can you be four days old?" inquired the puzzled soldier. "I was born when the Red Army arrived." A Jewish eyewitness recalls how a Jewish doctor in the town of ***Bursztyn,*** in Eastern Galicia, raised his fist clenched in the Communist-style to salute his Soviet comrades.

The theme of Stalin being a Messiah for the Jews was widespread. A high school student from ***Lwów*** wrote:

> I must admit that if ever anyone actually knew complete happiness, that was the day the Red Army entered. That's the way I imagined the Jews awaiting the Messiah will feel, when he finally comes. It is hard to find words to describe the feeling—this waiting and this happiness. And at last we had lived to see it: they arrived in Lwów. The first tanks rolled in and we wondered how to express ourselves—to throw flowers? to sing? To organize a demonstration? How to show our great joy?

These sycophantic displays enjoyed particular longevity in smaller border towns such as ***Wołożyn*** where a Jewish witness recalled the pervasive pro-Soviet mood of the Jewish population as follows:

> Changes that could be seen as both comic and tragic occurred in the Volozhyn Jews' style of dressing. The treasured fashion trend of the Soviets was high boots. It was distressing yet amusing for us to see distinguished *balabatim* such as Reb Isaak Shapiro, Reb Hirsh Malkin, Reb Yakov Veissbord, Reb Avrom Shuker, Reb Mordechay Shishko, Reb Namiot der Sheliver (name of his natal shtetl), Sholom Leyb Rubinstein and others walking in high boots. Most people wanted to please the new rulers. They threw away the elegant tied shirts that symbolized the Polish bourgeoisies [sic] and "decorated" themselves with the Soviet khaki *guimnastiorka.*

Polish accounts from ***Lwów*** are also informative:

> Meanwhile the town suddenly changed its character. Jews poured onto the streets and, by all external appearances, Lwów was a Jewish town, especially when one considers the masses of Jewish refugees who had come from the West. These throngs manifested an intense sympathy for the Soviet army units and tanks that rolled by. Every Jew felt it his duty to wear a red ribbon on his lapel or, if possible, some Soviet emblem.
>
> On Sunday, September 24th, workers' demonstrations filled the streets. Of course, they were almost exclusively Jewish and expressed their joy at being "liberated." Poles and … Ukrainians were not seen often on the streets, and their faces were visibly dejected.
>
> The next days the walls of buildings and houses were colored with different posters. But they all had the same substance. "The rule of the Polish masters has ended, the Red Army has liberated Poland." One poster particularly struck me because it hurt me, a Polish eagle was shown wearing a four-cornered Polish soldier's cap all stained with blood and a Soviet soldier stood over it sticking it with a bayonet.
>
> The Communists continuously organized meetings and rallies in the town square. The crowds were drawn by members of the NKVD, who had them sing [revolutionary songs in Ukrainian] … There were hardly any Poles in that throng. There were a few Ukrainian Communists, but most of all there were Jews who didn't even know Ukrainian well, but each of them shouted for three …
>
> I was travelling from Borysław to Drohobycz [in October 1939] in one compartment with a young Jewish girl who, as if intoxicated, spoke about the Red Army and the Soviets with whole-hearted adulation. … My co-traveller finished her praises with this remark:
>
> "How refined they are, what culture they possess. Every soldier has three watches on his wrist, and good Swiss ones. I'm familiar with these matters because my father is a watchmaker."

She said this entirely seriously. The first thing that Soviet soldiers had stolen in our region was precisely watches, and the most widely known Russian saying was "*davai chasy"* ("Hand over your watch").

The situation in a small village outside ***Równe***, in predominantly Ukrainian Volhynia, a region far removed from the German front and close to the Soviet border, was described by a Polish eyewitness with all its striking and symbolic juxtapositions.

[At the train station] we found hundreds of [Polish] military men and staff workers gathered into little groups. We joined one of the gatherings, exchanging small talk.

As we talked, our attention was suddenly drawn to a group of young people across the street. Slightly more than a dozen young men and women, who appeared to be Jewish, wearing red arm bands were gathered about a pretty girl with long black curls protruding from under a red calico kerchief. In her hands, she cradled a tray, on which were a bottle of wine and a loaf of bread. Some of us discussed this, and one of us recalled that the wine and the bread might symbolize the Jewish ritual of welcoming home Jews who had been victorious in battle.

Despite their sudden appearance across from the station, they remained inactive and strangely silent. They appeared to be waiting for something: a middle aged man, who appeared to be one of them, joined them, and looking over to our wondering gaze, broke into a wide grin. "They are coming," he exclaimed.

This caused his group to break into an excited chatter, and then they all turned to look eastward along the road. Their eyes appeared glazed, either with excitement or hope, we knew not which. Perhaps, I thought, they expect the Messiah. We looked eastward also, to see what could be coming. And then we saw what it was.

Far down the muddy road could be seen a column of armed soldiers, marching maybe six abreast, in a close formation. …

"We are *Evrei!* I heard the Jews shout out. They broke into a run, the girl with her tray in their midst, toward the soldiers. I recognized the word as one meaning that they were Jewish. … But, for the first time, I began to realize who these soldiers might be. Evrei is a Russian word.

By now, the group had reached the soldiers, and they were embracing them. I remained almost hypnotized, watching the scene. Now the girl was moving about the soldiers with her tray, laughing, and offering wine and bread, which they ignored, as they continued marching toward us, their faces stern and set. Even when the girl kissed a couple of the soldiers, they never broke stride and continued to march on without expression.

Ignoring our people at the station, they marched right by. One onlooker cried, "What is it, an invasion?"

"Who can they be?" a woman wondered aloud. Then, as we saw at close hand the peaked caps emblazoned with a red calico star, the truth burst upon all of us at once:

"*Bolsheviks!*" …

A Polish officer standing nearby nervously lit a cigarette, and shaking his head sadly, murmured, "We don't yet know the nature of this … They haven't declared war. What can they be doing here?"

… Two small tanks emblazoned with red stars, and obviously Russian, rolled by.

By now, the column had reached a cluster of small houses near the station, where the road ran between them. The soldiers stopped. I saw a large delegation of Jewish elders standing across the road. Some sort of ceremony appeared to be taking place. Obviously, they were welcoming the Red Army—and it appeared to be prearranged. Suddenly, I saw the soldiers break ranks abruptly and move in with bayonets fixed upon those Polish officers and cadets gathered loosely about the station building. Moving very swiftly, they disarmed the Polish Army men and took them into custody. I watched them rip the insignia and medals from the uniforms of the Polish troops. Even as they did this, they pushed and jabbed their victims toward the train station and then into the station. …

When they had done this, two Red soldiers slammed shut the big wide archway doors of the station. The scene was horrifying. … Sickened by the brutality, we stood there silent, helpless, unable to move, staring at the doors with their ornate carvings.

The silence was interrupted by a man who slipped around behind the station and came back. "They have loaded our officers into the train," he said in a hushed voice. …

We started to walk away and were stopped by a soldier who waved his bayoneted rifle at us. "Get back there, you," he shouted in broken Polish.

An officer, who spoke more clearly, came up to our group of staff workers huddled near the building. He appeared to be of high rank. Like a chant, he intoned in brusk Russian why the Red Army had come.

We could not understand him, but a villager who knew Russian translated the rambling speech. The Bolshevik was bragging of how the glorious and unconquered Red Army had come to save and liberate the Russian and Ukrainian brethren from the oppressive yoke of the landed gentry.

"The Red Army has come as your brothers to redeem the Polish citizens from the Polish government," the translator said. The officer continued. He told us that the Soviets now considered the Polish State nonexistent. It would be the role of the glorious, liberating Red Army to protect us, he said. The chant went on. Even the translation sounded like a chant.

"We will give you happiness. Long live the rising sun Stalin!"

"Long live the Soviet Socialist Union!"

"Glory to the heroic Red Army!"

Only the *Sieg Heils* were missing, I thought. After this shameless speech, made while the "liberators" were herding our valiant officers into the train, we were ordered to go to the nearby homes. Pushed by soldiers carrying their guns at the ready, our group moved obediently into the houses. We found that the residents had set out tables for the investigation of our papers. …

Down the street, the soldiers stood at the ready in a grotesque pageant of olive green, their bayonets still fixed. A guard unit had been spread around the station, and nobody knew what could be happening inside. The train engine belched smoke but remained motionless. A few civilians walked dazedly from the scene.

The significance of what was happening was not lost on some Jews, mostly from the educated and culturally assimilated spheres, such as the following witness to events in ***Zbaraż,*** a town north of Tarnopol.

> Later that day we saw many Soviet tanks, all coming from the direction of the Soviet border, just a few kilometers away. Later still, we were shocked to see Polish prisoners of war led by Soviet soldiers. Seeing Polish soldiers stripped of their weapons and rank was terribly depressing: the beginning of a new era. During the next few days printed propaganda posters appeared on the walls. They were very offensive and criticized the Polish government and "oppressive bourgeoisie class". They contained messages about freeing the Western Ukraine from Polish oppression.

When this Jewish youth returned to his home town of ***Lwów,*** the same atmosphere prevailed there:

> Criticism of the Polish government, the Polish army, Polish pre-war politics and particularly Polish [sic] hostility toward the Soviet Union, was very sharp and could be felt everywhere. Political posters on the streets were full of propaganda, such as [Marshal] Pilsudski [Piłsudski] having been the greatest enemy of the people.

In the face of these abundant testimonies, both Jewish and Polish, it is amazing to read Jan T. Gross's recent assessment of what transpired. "We have no clear evidence to judge the size of the welcoming groups," he writes dismissively. "Undoubtedly only a small fraction of the local population showed up on these occasions." As to why the youth predominated among them, Gross observes glibly: "Not surprisingly, for one should hardly expect local youth, in some godforsaken backwater, to quietly sit at home when an army goes by their hamlet and does not kill or rob anybody!" The views of Israeli historian Robert S. Wistrich are even more strident. According to Wistrich, not only is the enthusiastic welcome by Jews of the invading Red Army a myth, but also it is a manifestation of antisemitism. The latter, rather ugly, charge is undoubtedly calculated to stifle debate on this topic.

> According to this theory—still very popular in Poland—when the Red Army entered the eastern half of the country in mid-September 1939, it had been enthusiastically welcomed by the Jewish population. Not only Catholic nationalists, ultra-rightists and open antisemites espouse this myth but also prominent historians such as Professor Tomasz Strzembosc [sic—Strzembosz], of the Catholic University of Lublin.

Most Jews who lived through those times, such as Michel (Mendel) Mielnicki, have a different recollection of conditions in their small towns, in his case, ***Wasilków*** just outside Białystok. Furthermore, they know who was present when the Soviets arrived, why they were there and what they were cheering for. The following is his recollection of that "love affair."

> But, as *The Wasilkower Memorial Book* records, everyone in the Jewish community was in such a holiday mood on the evening of 18 September [1939] as they awaited the arrival of the Red Army

that they didn't want to go to bed lest they miss any part of this historic occasion. Certainly, this is the way I remember things.

I also can confirm that everyone cheered when our neighbour from across the street, Mordechai Yurowietski, the tinsmith's son, raised a red flag on top of the fire station tower. And cheered again when a Soviet aircraft buzzed the crowd … to drop leaflets welcoming us as "Brothers and Sisters of West Byelo-Russia." And when the Soviet soldiers finally did march in the next morning, … they did so singing "Katiusha," with all the little Jewish and White Russian kids parading along beside them, joining in their song. This was a scene worthy of a Sigmund Romberg operetta. …

And contrary to Western propaganda, being part of the Soviet Union gave the overwhelming majority of those in our community the security of belonging to a civil society, or at least one that was a hell of a lot more civil than anything we'd experienced before. … Even my rebbe was a relatively happy man under the atheistic Communists. … When a plebiscite was held in October and November 1939 on whether we actually wanted to be part of West Byelorussia, the majority of people … (my mother and father included) voted "Yes".

Michael Maik, a native of the town of ***Sokoły,*** penned this account in his wartime diary*:*

The next day, soldiers of the Red Army entered the town. The people of Sokoly, from the biggest to the smallest, from the youngest to the oldest, men, women and children, all went out to the streets to greet the liberating soldiers. The Jews received the "Reds" with shouts of joy and enthusiasm. In comparison, the Poles stood disappointed.

The authors of the memorial book of ***Dawidgródek,*** a small town in Polesia, are even more explicit about their new loyalties and their condemnation of the vanquished Polish state:

Without question September 19, 1939 was the happiest day in the lives of David-Horodoker Jews in the course of the previous dozen years. After the shooting between the Poles and the Red Army detachments had ended, the entire Jewish population … came out in the streets with happy smiling faces, and received the Red Army detachments … Young and old, small and large, man and wife– all stood on the sidewalk of the main street through which the army troops passed. With smiling faces and waving hands, they greeted the Red Army men. … That day everyone was simply intoxicated with joy and happiness.

In the afternoon a meeting was held under the free sky, and representatives of the Red Army made speeches in which they pledged a free and blissful life for the inhabitants of the freed regions of West White Russia and Western Ukraine. "Oppression, people-hatred and poverty will no longer be the destiny of the freed brotherly people of Western Ukraine and West White Russia. From henceforth you will enjoy a favored status, freedom, brotherhood, love and you will work under the rays of the sun of the great folk-leader Comrade Stalin." That was the sum and substance of the speeches which were held at the meeting.

Understandably the chief celebrants, who acted as if they were the hosts, were the few Jewish communists in town. They were joined by several town citizens of David-Horodok. All day until

> late in the night, everyone stayed in the streets conversing with the Red Army men about how the Poles had suppressed the national minorities and the Jews. … On the night of September 19, 1939 the Jews of David-Horodok slept peacefully and blissfully, and were full of hope for a bright future.

As the following accounts from ***Krynki*** near Białystok show, jubilation often overflowed into active support for the new regime.

> Kushnir Eliahu and Friede Zalkin:
> The Jewish population of Krinki [Krynki] awaited the arrival of the Red Army, and as soon as our workers heard that the Soviet military had crossed the border, they did not wait long before taking over the government in the shtetl. Before the Polish police managed to leave Krinki, there was already a red flag flying from City Hall.
>
> Jews welcome the Soviets with an outbreak of joy and enthusiasm. Communists jumped up onto the tanks and kissed the soldiers. The people were just plain happy.
>
> Abraham Soyfer:
> There was great joy in Krinki. People hugged each other with tears streaming down their cheeks, tears of joy and luck.
>
> Beyl'ke Shuster-Greenstein:
> The shtetl was truly dancing in the streets. Everyone was beaming as they met their friends and chatted and talked politics. Everyone was in a holiday mood.
>
> People took flowers and called out to welcome the Red Army.

Jan T. Gross, who exonerates Jewish behaviour by resorting to "the lesser of two evils" theory, also claims—but provides no evidence—that "in many instances … the welcoming ceremonies were organized on explicit instructions, and people were forced to attend"; elsewhere, he claims that the triumphal arches "were erected most often out of fear." He assures us that "the majority of the residents were fearful" of the Red Army and "only a small fraction of the local population showed up on these occasions." The conspicuously large crowds of Jews "milling" in the streets of large cities such as Lwów, Wilno and Białystok can be explained simply by the fact that the Jewish population had allegedly doubled in size because of the influx of refugees from the German zone, which created a severe housing shortage.[2] However, these rather fanciful claims find little support in Jewish testimonies or in Soviet population statistics,[3] nor do they explain the overwhelming receptions given to the Red Army by Jews in small towns

[2] Gross, *Upiorna dekada,* 66–67; Gross, "A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists," in Deák, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe,* 93–94.

[3] According to Soviet statistics, there were 39,000 refugees in Lwów in March 1940, of whom 26,000 were Jews. The number of refugees increased to 54,000 in May of that year, with Jews likely accounting for about two thirds. Since the city counted some 100,000 Jews in 1931, the Jewish population grew only by about 20 to 30 percent. See Hryciuk, *Polacy we Lwowie 1939–1944,* 88.

where refugees were rather scarce. Moreover, such obfuscations have been been rejected by other historians of Jewish origin who have acknowledged that the reality was much more complex. Mark Mazower, citing Ben-Cion Pinchuk, writes: "many left-wing Jews, especially the younger ones, greeted the Red Army with enthusiasm. … they welcomed the promise of civic equality. That Soviet rule spelled doom for the traditional institutions of *shtetl* life (not to mention other political parties) bothered their elders but not them."

A common occurrence was creating ersatz Soviet flags by cutting off the white upper portion of Polish flags, thereby giving more colour to the accompanying pro-Soviet chanting. Before it can be seriously suggested that all this was merely a display of gratitude for saving Jews from an unknown fate at the hands

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There is likely more validity in the claim that in many towns that fell immediately under German rule, it was out of fear (and to ingratiate themselves) that Jews built welcoming gates and dispatched delegations to greet the invaders. In Radom, a Jewish delegation headed by a rabbi and other community leaders marched down the flower-strewn Mikołaj Rej Street on September 8, 1939 to welcome the German army. See Józef Łyżwa, "Pomagałem, a potem siedziałem," *Gazeta Polska* (Warsaw), February 10, 1994. A Jewish delegation led by a rabbi greeted the Germans in Zaręby Kościelne near Ostrów Mazowiecka. See Tomasz Strzembosz, "Zstąpienie szatana czy przyjazd gestapo," *Rzeczpospolita* (Warsaw), May 12, 2001. For other examples see: Bednarczyk, *Życie codzienne warszawskiego getta,* 242 (Jews built triumphal arches in Łódź, Pabianice, and elsewhere, and Jewish community leaders, headed by rabbis dressed in ceremonial robes, greeted the Germans bearing trays with bread and salt); Eugeniusz Buczyński, *Smutny wrzesień: Wspomnienia* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1985), 132 (Ukrainian nationalists and Jews together erected a triumphal arch for the Germans in Przemyśl and looted Polish military buildings); Elinor J. Brecher, *Schindler's Legacy: True Stories of the List Survivors* (New York: Penguin, 1994), 56 (Jews greeted the Germans in Kraków); Jake Gelwert, *From Auschwitz to Ithaca: The Transnational Journey of Jake Geldwert* (Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 2002), 28 (Jews greeted the Germans in Kraków); Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust,* 315 n.167 (Jews greeted the Germans in Janów Lubelski). The last Jewish delegation to welcome the German army was probably in Międzyrzec Podlaski on October 10, 1939, after the departure of the Red Army from that town. See Józef Geresz, *Międzyrzec Podlaski: Dzieje miasta i okolic* (Biała Podlaska and Międzyrzec Podlaski: Ośrodek Wschodni "Civitas Christiana", 1995), 299. Confirmation of these events can also be found in a report of a leftist Italian diplomat: "in the first days of the conflict, numerous Jews greeted the entrance of the German armies into Polish cities with cries of joy." See Eugenio Reale, *Raporty: Polska 1945–1946* (Paris: Institut Littéraire, 1968), 204. In Oświęcim, on September 1, 1939, two Jews took in and cared for a wounded German, who had parachuted from a crashing plane, without informing the Polish authorities of his presence. When the Germans arrived on September 3rd, the Jews led them to the wounded man who, it turned out, was an important Nazi officer. See Moshe Weiss, "To Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Liberation from Auschwitz," *The Jewish Press* (Brooklyn), January 27, 1995. Henryk Schönker presents this story in a different light. He states that the German officer was a pilot whose plane had been shot down while bombing Oświęcim. Fearful of possible future retaliation by the Germans, his father, the leader of the Jewish community, decided not to hand the officer over to the Polish authorities, who, in any event, had ceased to function in that town. Leon Schönker hid the officer at his factory with the assistance of a caretaker, a Christian of German origin. Later, the grateful German officer alleviated conditions for Jews in the town, at least for a time. See Henryk Schönker, *Dotknięcie anioła* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, 2005), 22–24. A Jew in Rzeszów was easily duped into believing that the German invaders were potential benefactors, according to one Jew witness: "I recall to this day how one of our neighbors, Bielfeld, came to our home and told us with excitement how good the Germans are, in that they distribute sugar and other such products, which we had not been able to obtain for some time. He explained how they honored him with a meal fit for a king—in return for some small matter, such as the giving of information about the address of the Jewish communal organization and other such organizations." See Klara Ma'ayan Munzberg, "During the Nazi Occupation," in *Rzeszow Community Memorial Book,* Internet: <http://www/jewishgen.org/yizkor/rzeszow/rzeszow.html>, translation of M. Yari-Wold, *Kehilat Raysha: Sefer zikaron* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Rzeszow in Israel and the USA, 1967), 322ff. The motivation behind some of these actions is baffling because German designs, albeit not yet a full-blown Holocaust, were plainly apparent from the outset and public mistreatment and humiliation of Jews was widespread. In the town of Będzin, the Germans perpetrated a pogrom on September 8th, setting fire to the synagogue and Jewish houses. A large group of Jews who fled was sheltered by Rev. Mieczysław Zawadzki on the grounds of the Catholic church. See Stanisław Wroński and Maria Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1971), 321. Was it merely a matter of opportunism? Part of the answer may lie in the popular sentiments shared even by the élite of the Jewish community and expressed best in the wartime diary of Chaim Kaplan, a rabbi, educator and author from Warsaw, cited later in the text.

of the Germans, and that it did not in any way cast aspersions on the loyalty or even neutrality of the large masses of jubilant participants, one should consider how Jews in Western Poland viewed pro-Nazi outbursts on the part of the ethnic German population living there. A young German-speaking Jewish woman from the heavily German city of Bielsko, in Polish Silesia, recorded her sense of shock and indignation at her German neighbours' behaviour in the early days of September 1939:

> I looked out again. A swastika was flying from the house across the street. My God! They seemed prepared. All but us, they knew.
>
> A big truck filled with German soldiers was parked across the street. Our neighbors were serving them wine and cakes, and screaming as though drunk with joy. "Heil Hitler! Long live the Führer! We thank thee for our liberation!"
>
> I couldn't understand it. I didn't seem to be able to grasp the reality of what had happened. What are those people doing? The same people I had known all my life. They have betrayed us. …
>
> I looked out the window and there was Trude, a girl I had known since childhood. She and her grandmother lived rent-free in a two-room apartment in our basement in return for laundry service. Now I saw her carrying flowers from our garden, white roses of which she had been so proud because they bloomed out of season. She handed them to a soldier, breaking her tongue with the unfamiliar German, "Heil Hitler!" The soldier reached for the flowers, but somebody offered him some schnapps. … I started sobbing, crying, releasing all my emotions and anxieties in that outburst. …
>
> Early in the afternoon the drunken, jubilant mob was still celebrating its "liberation" and hoarsely shouting "Heil Hitler". … I realized that we were outsiders, strangers in our own home, at the mercy of those who until then had been our friends. Although I was only fifteen I had a strong feeling, more instinct than reason, that our lives were no longer our own, but lay in the hands of a deadly enemy. …
>
> The next morning, I was in the kitchen with Mama when Mrs. Rösche, one of the neighbors, came in with another woman and asked for our Polish flag.
>
> "The flag?" Mama asked. "What for?"
>
> "To make a German one, of course. It's really simple. You leave the red stripe as it is, cut a circle out of the white, and you put a black swastika on it." …
>
> Those two neighbors spent all morning sewing a Nazi flag to hang from our house. … Mrs. Rösche and the other woman struggled to fasten the flag through the little hole on the roof. I couldn't bring myself to look out of the window for days, but when I did, there was the blood-red symbol of the tragedy that had engulfed us.

According to German reports, enraged Jews also attacked German civilians who were taken hostage by the Polish army or Polish authorities during the early stages of the German invasion. On the march through Kutno, a group of ethnic Germans were set upon by

> a crazed mob (mostly Jews) and badly beaten. … they set about the seriously ill and half dead comrades lying on carts at the back of each column with clubs and iron bars.

Even in the Eastern Borderlands, Jews looked with trepidation as the German minority began to show it true colours even before the arrival of either the Germans or Soviets. As one Jewish resident of ***Włodzimierz Wołyński,*** in Volhynia, describes,

> On the afternoon of September 12, members of the Fifth Column, Polish citizens of German ancestry who secretly collaborated with the Nazis, donned German uniforms and strolled back and forth down Farna Street. I recognized the Schoen brothers, Bubi and Rudi, friends of youth and sons of the local pastor. They didn't look at me as we passed, and I ran back home. Our close friendship, which had begun in grade school, had cooled over the years as they spent their summer vacations in Germany. In one of our last conversations, nearly two years before, Bubi told me I should leave Poland with my family because bad things were going to happen to Jews.

Outbursts of pro-Soviet solidarity were not restricted to the Eastern Borderlands. The Germans and Soviets had originally agreed to a partition line running significantly to the west of the River Bug and, for a brief period, the Soviets occupied a large portion of central Poland, namely Lublin province (in addition to the Łomża region, from which they did not withdraw). There too, as in ***Siedlce***, the Jewish population erected triumphal arches and greeted the Soviet invaders enthusiastically donning red armbands and ribbons.

In some towns near the Soviet border, Poles and even Polish officials were initially among the throngs greeting the Soviet army. Indeed, Polish soldiers were given orders by their commanders not to fire at the Soviet army. Duped by Soviet propaganda, these Poles were under the mistaken impression that the Soviets had come to help them fight the Germans, and not to subjugate their country. The Soviet tanks that rolled into ***Kopyczyńce,*** for example, were adorned with Polish flags and slogans of Soviet help in the fight against the common Nazi enemy. The Poles were soon disabused of these short-lived illusions, however. As the confusion gave way to the certainty that Soviets did not come as defenders of Poland, dejected, they abandoned the cheering throngs. Many Jews, Belorussians and Ukrainians, on the other hand, openly welcomed the prospect of Soviet rule instead of Polish rule.

Why did the Jews in particular greet the invading Soviet army en masse? Jewish apologists offer the following explanation, as if *all* Jews shared the exact same motivation: the Jews simply preferred the Soviets to the murderous Germans, who were intent on annihilating them. Of course, no one knew about the Holocaust in 1939 and few Jews in Eastern Poland had witnessed the Germans in action. In reality, as these accounts show, their motivation varied: some did indeed fear the Germans, while others were happy to see the demise of the Polish state; some were pro-Soviet, while others were prepared to curry favour with the new rulers. In September 1939, relatively few Jews displayed any misgivings about the new state of affairs. Their attitude was thus markedly different from that of the Poles who regarded the invasion as unmitigated tragedy.

The reality of collaboration ran much deeper than warmly greeting the invading Soviet forces, however,

and its consequences had a devastating impact on the Polish population and on Polish-Jewish relations. As we shall see, Jewish collaboration with the Soviet invaders was responsible, directly or indirectly, for the loss of many thousands of Polish lives.

CHAPTER THREE

Did Jews under the Soviet occupation actually
kill or murder any Polish soldiers or civilians?
I know of no single documented case of any
Jews executing Poles under Soviet rule.
Robert S. Wistrich (2003)

Fifth Columnists and Armed Rebellions

While throngs of Jews came out to greet the Soviet invaders in the towns and villages of Eastern Poland, the country continued to fight for its very existence. The most reprehensible actions were the armed rebellions, such as those in Grodno and Skidel, staged by local fifth columnists in anticipation of the Soviet takeover. They surely rank among the most despicable chapters of wartime collaboration. Recent research by historian Marek Wierzbicki has brought to light many more cases—all of them in localities where no German soldier had set foot: ***Jeziory, Łunin, Wiercieliszki, Brzostowica Wielka, Ostryna, Dubno, Dereczyn, Zelwa, Motol, Wołpa, Janów Poleski, Wołkowysk, Horodec,*** and ***Drohiczyn Poleski.*** As the evidence shows, these rebellions directed against Polish rule had little, if anything, to do with anti-Nazi sentiments. In all likelihood, they would have taken place even if the Soviet Union had invaded Poland alone.

There are also numerous recorded cases of Jewish saboteurs shooting at or ambushing Polish troops—the only army that was fighting the Nazis at the time. Jews also acted as guides for the Soviets and spontaneously pointed out the location of remnants of the Polish army. Having armed themselves and formed self-styled militias, workers' guards and revolutionary committees in many localities, Jews also played a significant role in the apprehension, round-up, mistreatment and even murder of Polish officers, soldiers, police and officials.

In ***Grodno,*** where the town's officials formed a spontaneous local defence after the departure of the Polish army, the atmosphere had already become charged on September 17th, when sporadic shooting erupted in that city. Armed Jews held clandestine meetings in various places in town. Jadwiga Dąbrowska witnessed the ambush of a Polish soldier, her neighbour's son, shot dead by a young Jew who emerged from such a meeting in a nearby home.

Preparations were also underway in the countryside. As one Jewish source notes, "With the publication of the news on the radio that the Russians crossed the Polish border, the communists of Grodno and its surroundings began to confiscate the weapons from the retreated Polish soldiers. The Poles looked at this behavior with a lot of anger and hate." Perversely, that source then blames this state of events on the Poles. "No wonder the Jews welcomed the Russians as their redeemers and saviors."

On September 19th, the evening before the Soviets entered Grodno, local communist supporters, consisting mainly of Jews, staged an armed rebellion against Polish rule. One eyewitness described the

activities of the city's fifth column as follows: "Suddenly some shots rang out on Brygidzka Street. We observe that on the balconies Jews with red armbands are shooting at people in the street." Another eyewitness noted that Jews had mounted a light machine gun on the roof of a house on Dominikańska Street and threw hand grenades out of windows. Similar reports came from Orzeszkowa Street. Naturally, the Polish civil authorities, police and military, responded to this rebellion.

When the Soviet tanks rolled into Grodno early on September 20th, they brought with them as guides Jewish Communists from that town, among them Lew Aleksandrowicz, Margolis, Lifszyc, and Abraszkin, who had fled to the Soviet Union before the war. Local Jews flocked to the ranks of the Soviet militia and NKVD and, along with many Jewish civilian supporters, took part in the fighting that again ensued. Grenades and machine gun-fire from Jewish homes were aimed at soldiers who were fighting for Poland's freedom.

Jews also took part in the subsequent round-up of Polish soldiers, police, activists and even high school students, who had rallied to the defence of the city. Roving, hysterical bands preyed on fleeing Poles. Jews fingered Poles to Soviet soldiers, apprehended them and even attacked them physically. There were scores of executions throughout Grodno; the bodies of Polish victims, often disfigured, littered the streets. Some 130 Polish students and officers cadets were executed on Psia Góra (Dog Mountain) and in Sekret forest. Rampages were the order of the day as brutal repressions ensued.

> After the Polish defence had broken down Soviet troops took over all of the important points in the town such as the administration buildings, police stations and jails, etc. Fully armed execution squads descended on the town. In the first days after the town was occupied those who were arrested were not sent to places of detention, jails or prisoner of war camps, but were shot on the spot.
>
> One of these Soviet detachments, led to our home by a Jewish co-inhabitant wearing a red arm band, arrested my father. My father, Jan Kurczyk, was a 45-year-old school teacher. After being taken out of the home he was shot dead. … My father had not taken part in the defence of Grodno, but it was enough that someone had fingered him because he was a Pole and educated in order to murder him without a trial in the Nazi fashion.

> A cruel fate awaited Polish soldiers and hundreds of residents of Grodno who were taken prisoner after being fingered by Jewish and Belorussian fighting squads. The men were cruelly disfigured: their noses, limbs, and ears were cut off, their eyes were gouged out. Groups of fifteen were then tied together by barbed wire. They were fastened to tanks and dragged for several hundred metres over stony roads. The bodies were then thrown into roadside ditches and bomb craters. The moans and cries of the murdered could be heard over a distance of a few kilometres. This grim situation was intensified by the fires. Polish homes were set ablaze after being ravaged by Jewish youths wearing red bandannas and bows.

> What most sticks in my mind were the terrifying scenes which took place at that time on the streets and outskirts of Grodno. For example, at the corner of Orzeszkowa and Dominikańska Streets,

> when a vehicle carrying two [Polish] officers and a driver came to a momentary stop, a group of armed Jews ran out of some nearby houses, pulled out the soldiers and assaulted them. They then hacked their bodies up with axes and piled them up on the road.

Once the townspeople were subdued, Jews from Grodno forayed into the countryside as scouts to identify villagers who had taken part in defending the city during the Soviet onslaught. They appeared as militiamen and members of the NKVD and accosted young Polish men they encountered with threats of reprisals: "You went to fight for the *Pans*. I'll give you your Poland, you mother-fucker." (*Pan*, in this context, alludes to the pre-Partition Poland of the landed gentry; it was used pejoratively by Communists to refer to the "bourgeois" Poles of the interwar years.) Polish soldiers in the vicinity were also savagely attacked.

Months later, after the Soviet regime was firmly installed, show trials of "reactionary" Poles were conducted at which Jewish witnesses came forward in abundance to level charges against Poles accused of taking part in the fighting. A number of Poles were sentenced and some executed for opposing the Communist rebellion in Grodno. Soviet propaganda labelled this, and other such occurrences, as "pogroms." However, among the alleged pogromists were not only etnic Poles, but also Polish citizens of other nationalities, including Byelorussians and Jews.

A similar scene was witnessed in ***Skidel,*** a small town near Grodno. On September 17th, Jewish and some Belorussian Communists, strengthened by local Jews and (a few) Belorussians, set up a revolutionary committee which seized power in the town, arrested members of the Polish administration, and took the Polish garrison. They captured a large group of Polish officers from the Regional Reinforcement Command in Białystok, whom they subjected to show trials and beatings, killing at least one of the officers. Understandably, this state of affairs prompted Polish retaliation the following day and some of the Communist rebels were killed.

In ***Wołkowysk,*** an armed group of diversionaries, for the most part Jews, attacked a Polish army barracks, burned part of it down, and looted its contents. Captured rifles were distributed among local pro-Communist elements who formed a militia. Polish forces retaliated.

In ***Berdówka*** near Lida, a Red militia consisting of Jews and Belorussians set upon and murdered a number of officers and soldiers of the Frontier Defence Corps (Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza–KOP), who were preparing their defence against the Soviet invaders.

Local Communists consisting of Jews and Belorussians also attempted to disarm the legal civil defence in ***Baranowicze*** on September 17th, before the arrival of the Soviet forces. In ***Nowogródek*** some Jews took up arms in support of Soviet invaders and one of the fifth columnists—an alleged "victim" of the Poles—lost his life in the fighting.

> At 7 o'clock in the evening [of September 17] a loud noise was heard and the first powerful Russian tanks appeared in Korelicze street. They were met by the Jewish population with jubilation and flowers. … People in the streets were in a festive mood. There were Jewish soldiers in the Soviet army who made themselves known to the local community. At 10 o'clock in the evening the

> loudspeakers announced that the town was governed by a military administration. … At 1 o'clock in the morning sounds of intensive shooting were heard. Everyone endeavoured to take cover. No one knew what caused the shooting. A rumour spread next morning that some bullets broke window panes. Some soldiers told us that they were fighting the Poles, who were shooting from cover. The strong fire was concentrated in Kowalski Street, where the Catholic Church was. The resistance was suppressed by the morning. During that night the first Jewish victim fell—the older son of Aba Zamkowy was shot by the Poles.

In ***Byteń***, a small town to the north, Jewish Communists seized control of the town and organized a warm reception for the Soviet army. Guns were seized from the Polish police and delivered to the newly formed Red militia. A Polish officer, who had passed through the area on September 17th fleeing bombardment by German forces, encountered a barricade set up by local Communists who opened fire and critically wounded him. As could be expected, the Polish authorities in the county seat of Słonim dispatched forces to break up the Soviet collaborators.

Armed groups of snipers opened fire on Polish army units on the outskirts of Zelwa and Dereczyn. A revolutionary committee composed mainly of Jews and some Belorussians had seized control of the town of ***Zelwa***. Polish supply columns were captured and Polish soldiers disarmed. Polish troops stormed the town and arrested some of the armed insurgents, but on the intervention of a priest, who was fearful of Soviet retaliation, they spared the culprits. After the Polish forces retreated, groups of young armed Jews and Belorussians with red armbands continued to terrorize the Polish population, arresting and shooting their victims of choice: Polish settlers, landowners, state employees, soldiers, and clergymen. Among the victims was Rev. Jan Kryński, the local Catholic pastor, who was executed together with a dozen Polish captives.

On September 17th, armed rebels seized control of ***Dereczyn*** and arrested the deputy commander of a battalion dispatched to that town from Słonim and his chauffeur. When his battalion arrived the following morning, it was fired on by young Jewish men whom the Polish forces then drove out of the town. The Poles conducted a search and found two suspected insurgents, one of whom was killed when he fired at and wounded a Polish soldier. The memorial book of that town essentially confirms the Polish accounts, except for allegations of an imagined, impending "pogrom," and provides some additional details of what occurred including the attempted lynching of the local Catholic pastor.

> *Jekuthiel Khmelnitsky:* Afterwards came September 1939 and the outbreak of the Second World War. … Dereczin was left literally with no one in charge, the people fled, and the Soviets had not yet arrived … groups of young people together with a few [Belorussian] Christians tried to assert control in the town, and just plain started trouble for no good reason, which nearly led to the outbreak of a pogrom in Dereczin [Dereczyn]. In the end, the Soviet 'leadership' finally arrived.

Pesha Feinsilber: Local Jewish youth, along with [Belorussian] Christians from nearby villages took over the forces in Dereczin on a temporary basis, until the Russians would arrive. They had a little bit of armament.

Immediately on that first night, they came knocking on my door, and ordered me to open the store, and to provide red cloth for banners and tablecloths, in order to receive the Red Army.

On the second night, three vehicles with Polish officers drove through Dereczin, after whom were supposed to come a contingent of the Polish army. The temporary authorities detained the Polish officers, beat them up, confiscated their autos, and arrested them. In town, an uproar and panic ensued: the contingent of Polish army was expected any minute, and the Poles [surely] would take out their displeasure at the arrest of the officers on us, the Jews. Many Jews fled the town, and hid out among Christians and in the fields.

In the early morning, the Rabbi was summoned to the local priest. There it was demanded of him that he should try to influence the young people, and obtain the release of the Polish officers from jail, because of the impending danger attending the arrival of the Polish army contingent who might wreck all of Dereczin. Only after expending considerable energy, did the Rabbi and the priest obtain the keys to the jail, and release the officers.

At about ten in the morning, the retreating Polish army entered. The officers singled out the *Beckenstein* home, and related how the "Reds" that fell upon them and wounded one of them had hidden themselves in the yard of this house. … With shouts that they had been fired upon from the walls of the house, they shot the elder *Beckenstein.* …

All the Jews began to emerge from hiding and began to prepare a reception for the Red Army. The following morning, the first detachments of Soviet soldiers arrived in wagons. They were greeted with joy and hand-clapping. When the first tanks arrived, they were greeted with shouts of: "To your health! Hurrah! Hurrah!" The entire town turned out to greet them.

Meir Bakalchuk: From my father and friends, I came to learn what Dereczin went through in those last days of Polish rule, and in the transition period until the Soviets arrived. A group of young people, responsible to no one, but intoxicated with communist doctrine, attempted to 'seize control' in Dereczin before the arrival of the Soviet army. They detained several Polish officers who were retreating. Following these officers, who were a vanguard for a much larger retreating Polish force, the Polish soldiers arrived … My father put his life on the line, and went out to the inflamed Polish soldiers, and promised to locate their officers. By exerting great energy, he was able to persuade these young people to release these Polish officers. The retreating Poles were in a hurry to flee as fast as possible from the enemy …

During those frightful days without a regime in place in Dereczin, another incident occurred: a notification went out all over town that the left wing youth, both Jews and [some Belorussian] Christians alike, were planning to shoot the local Catholic priest, who was known to be a liberal-minded individual, and who also had friendly relations with the Jews. On the prior day, the local priest in Zelva [Zelwa] had indeed been hung, whom the inflamed young people had accused of being sharply anti-communist.

When my father learned of the danger that awaited the priest of Dereczin, he resolved to do something to defuse the murder plot, for which the Jews would, ultimately, God forbid, pay dearly.

> My father went to the priest in the middle of the night, and surreptitiously brought him to our house. The following morning, large groups of young people surrounded our house, demanding that the priest be handed over to them. My father stood himself in the doorway and told them that only over his dead body would they be able to break into our house.
>
> In the middle of this conversation between my father and this gathered crowd, the first vanguard of Soviet officials arrived in town. Seeing a large crowd in front of our hose, they asked what was going on. When they found out about the issue with the priest, one of the Soviet officials asked my mother for a small table. He stood on the table and declared to the crowd that 'the Soviet regime does everything according to the rule of law, and nobody has aright to try and sentence anyone out of this process.' The young people were disarmed, and the Soviet military expressed their thanks to my father for his proper and sober position.

Of course, the platitudes of the eloquent Soviet officer was nothing more than a charade. Not only did the invading Soviets execute thousands of Poles extrajudicially, but they also encouraged the minorities to commit excesses against Poles and took no action to punish the culprits. Later, Meir Bakalchuk was to run into a member of the local lynch mob in exile in the Soviet interior:

> I must recall *Shmuel* the youth from Dereczin, a hard-bitten communist. It was he who demanded of my father in Dereczin that he turn over the priest, who had hidden himself with us. He served the Soviet authorities faithfully in Dereczin, and when the Russians retreated, they took *Shmuel* with them.

In ***Trzcianne*** near Łomża, the newly formed Jewish militia ventured out to meet the Red army but unexpectedly encountered a group of Polish soldiers. When the latter arrived in the village they found a gate erected in honour of the Soviets with a rabbi standing at the head of the welcoming committee. The soldiers destroyed the gate and threatened to burn down the village.

Already on the 18th of September, armed groups of Jews in ***Iwaniki,*** in Polesia, were joined by Jewish deserters from the Polish army and formed a local militia. In ***Motol*** and near ***Telechany,*** the local Jewish militia engaged the Polish police and soldiers in battle.

Daniel Golombka, a Jew from ***Rożyszcze***, a small Volhynian town near the prewar Soviet border, painted a grim picture of what, by the pen of others, might well have been portrayed as another anti-Semitic pogrom staged by Polish soldiers:

> The following morning found the communist youth, Jews and Ukrainians, rejoicing in the streets. … The communists set up a militia of local youth. They enthusiastically decided to form a guard of honour to welcome the Red Army, decorating the square with pictures of Stalin and the communist greats and bringing the fire brigade orchestra. But instead of the victorious Red Army, a train arrived bearing a load of Polish troops who apparently had not heard of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Agreement. The newly-formed militia enthusiastically set out to capture the Polish troops. Shooting and general chaos followed with all those in the vicinity taking cover, including those who had gathered to welcome the Reds.

A Polish eyewitness confirms the same general picture:

> Railway transports of Polish soldiers pass through town toward the east. The Polish authorities have left. Jews wearing red armbands and carrying rifles are on the streets. They praise the Red Army. They look askance at the Polish trains and, finally, decide to intervene.
>
> They approached a group of Polish officers who came down onto the platform. One of them struck a Polish officer in the face and said: "You Polish mug. Hand over your weapons!" The Polish captain took out his gun and shot the assailant. He then yelled to the wagons: "Shoot, men." Polish soldiers then opened fire, poured out of the wagons and started a chase. Bullets flew in the streets. Nine assailants were hit. The fleeing Jews screamed: "The Polish army won!"

The stalwart Soviet allies remained undeterred, however, as another Jew recalls:

> Right after the Soviets entered Rozyszcze, a Communist youth organization … seized control of the town. … these young Communists marched on the streets of the town with guns. They wore red armbands to identify themselves and arrested people thought to be fascists or enemies of the communist cause. I was afraid just to walk from the train station to Ytzel's house. I was afraid even though some [likely many if not most—*M/P.*] of the young men with armbands were Jews.

It was not as if there had been a history of marked animosity between Poles and Jews in that area which could have precipitated this state of affairs. A Jew from the nearby village of Kopaczówka, typical of many small localities, makes this very point in the Rożyszcze Memorial Book: "The relations between the Jews and the local Gentile population, which was mostly Polish, had been very good until the outbreak of the war." A Polish prisoner of war who had been released by the Germans and was making his way home was offered some food by a Jewish woman when he passed through the outskirts of Rożyszcze toward the end of September.

In advance of the Soviet entry, a group of armed Ukrainians and Jews seized control of the town of ***Stepań*** and arrested more than a dozen Polish functionaries—civil servants, policemen, teachers—and refugees from central Poland. They were detained in the police station located in the municipal building, where some of them were beaten. On their retreat westward, the night of September 19th and the following morning, squadrons of the Frontier Defence Corps and Machine Gun Battalion stormed the town in order to cross over the bridge on the River Horyń. In the ensuing skirmish, there were losses on both sides.

Polish soldiers were ambushed and fired on in ***Kołki***, also in Volhynia, by groups of saboteurs comprised of Jews and Ukrainians. The Polish troops were able to encircle the fifth columnists in a mill and shot at them. Buildings in the area were set on fire. Some Polish policemen had also been captured and murdered by local diversionaries. In retaliation, some members of the selsovet (village soviet) were executed.

Near ***Zborów***, in the Tarnopol region, the local Jewish militia and Ukrainian nationalists shot at retreating Polish soldiers. Previously, they had already seized control of the town of Zborów and slaughtered some Polish policemen.

In the town of ***Luboml,*** just east of the Bug River in Volhynia, local Jews took turns collaborating first with Germans, who originally occupied the town for two days on September 20th, and then with the Soviets, who took control of the town only on September 24th. Pro-Soviet Jews and Ukrainians had formed a revolutionary committee and seized power on September 18th after the departure of the Polish army. The people's guard, composed of up to 150 Jews and Ukrainians, arrested the county supervisor (*starosta*), public prosecutor and members of the town administration. When the Germans arrived, these militias apprehended and disarmed Polish soldiers, tearing the Polish emblems off their coats and uniforms, and handed them over to the Germans. As could be expected, when the Germans departed and Polish soldiers in the vicinity learned of what was happening, they struck back at the collaborators during the hiatus. Some of the captured insurgents were executed in town, others were taken to the Polish garrison in Chełm.

A similar situation took place in ***Kobryń,*** in Polesia, where the Germans armed local Jewish Communists, who then carried out diversionary assaults on Polish soldiers. Two flags—a German swastika and a Soviet star—flew over the town simultaneously and in harmony.

Tellingly, when German and Soviet forces met at ***Brześć*** on the Bug River, they celebrated their joint victory over Poland by staging a massive parade at which German General Heinz Guderian greeted Soviet General ("kombrig") Semen Krivoshein, a Jew, who saluted the Nazi swastika.

The cases of Grodno and Skidel illustrate that the stories of anti-Jewish pogroms perpetrated by Poles in September 1939 must be dismissed as baseless. In fact, these stories serve as a smokescreen for Jewish misconduct directed at Poles. Their mindless repetition only discredits Holocaust historiography. Moreover, the hallmark of the numerous Jewish militias that sprung up, as will be further substantiated, was not their anti-Nazi but rather their anti-Polish animus. Furthermore, it should not be assumed that pro-Soviet conduct on the part of Jews was simply a response to an overriding fear of a German takeover. Jewish cooperation with the Germans, when the opportunity presented itself, as in the cases of Luboml and Kobryń, was also a factor to be reckoned. The common denominator of the activities of the Jewish militia in particular, as will be substantiated further, was not its anti-Nazi but rather its anti-Polish animus.

In several localities Jews even greeted the German invaders in central Poland. One such display occurred in Radom where a Jewish delegation, headed by a rabbi and other leaders of the community, marched down the flower-strewn Mikołaj Rej Street on September 8, 1939 to welcome the German army. Such incidents strongly suggest that a much more important impetus for the resounding welcome given to the Soviets was the desire to ingratiate themselves with the new rulers, rather than to express their happiness for having being saved from German rule whose impact most scarcely knew.

As mentioned earlier, Jews often surfaced as guides for the invading Soviet troops. An eyewitness from ***Lwów*** recalled:

> I was at the Plac Mariacki in the centre of town when the Bolsheviks entered. Jews from Lwów

> rode on horseback with the front ranks. As members of the Communist Party they had offered their services to the Soviet army and were employed as guides.

In ***Dzisna***, a Jew by the name of Szulman, the son of the owner of a large textile store, also acted as a guide for the Soviet Army. Later he would draw up lists of Poles who, as "enemies of the state," were arrested and deported for "crimes" such as having fought in the Polish-Soviet War of 1919–1920. The stage was being set for the unfolding tragedy that would befall the Poles of the Eastern Borderlands.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Fate of Polish Officers and Soldiers

Polish soldiers, especially officers, were hunted down like animals, rounded up and detained in large numbers by the Soviet invaders and their collaborators. Among the collaborators were many Jews, who often formed self-appointed militias to help usher in Soviet rule. After their apprehension, the Polish captives were often mistreated in public and executed. Those who refused to surrender their weapons were summarily shot. The scene of Polish prisoners of war being led along streets and roads often brought open rejoicing on the part of the Jewish population and even abuse and assaults directed at the Poles.

The spirit of the new era was abundantly clear to the endangered Polish military personnel. Once out of uniform, they had to hide first and foremost not from the Soviet invaders, who could scarcely tell them apart, but from local collaborators, among whom Jews figured prominently. As one Polish officer recalls,

> Roads were a nightmare. Ukrainians and Jews stealthily murdered soldiers returning home or handed them over to the NKVD. The militia or police was … mostly Jewish. They wore red armbands on their sleeves and were armed. They detested everything that was Polish … He who did not see this and did not live through it has no idea what a horrible hell they, the Jews, created on these Polish territories which the Bolsheviks occupied.

As soon as the Soviets entered ***Nowogródek,*** Jews with red armbands came to the home of Constable Kazimierz Kosiński, who had left for Wilno earlier that day. Not finding him there, they harassed his terrified wife and demanded his bicycle.

In ***Raków,*** near the Soviet border,

> The local Jews reacted hysterically at the sight of the Russian "benefactors." They kissed [Soviet] tanks, tore Polish flags from buildings and trampled them, and spat at and verbally abused Polish soldiers whom they had captured somewhere. They seized a Polish commader, a captain of a company [Frontier Defence Corps], and led him triumphantly [and handed him over to the Soviets]. The entire group ganged up on this one defenceless person, ripping his shirt on the chest and shoving him around. As we watched this scene we were stunned and horrified. These were after all our neighbours, once ordinary, peaceful people. We had lived together for years. The children attended the same schools, played together and this was entirely natural for us. Our parents shopped [in their stores] … No one interfered with each other. … There were no grounds for animosity or conflict. So we could not comprehend what had possessed them, where this hatred came from.

According to a Jewish source, the newly formed workers' guard in ***Pińsk,*** headed by Benjamin Dodiuk and composed mostly of Jews, apprehended Polish officers and policemen in that city and executed them.

Patriotic Polish youth who rallied to the defence of their country were also not spared. Often they were turned in by ordinary Jews, even women, as the following Jewish account illustrates.

> I knew a woman called Bashke, the mother of four children. At the beginning of the war the woman hid in an orchard for protection from the air attacks. A Russian mounted soldier passing by was shot at by two young Poles, but he escaped unhurt. He dismounted from his horse to find out who had fired the shots. The woman pointed to the two young men, and they were arrested.

Near ***Pińsk***, Henryk Skirmuntt (no relation to Count Skirmunt mentioned below), a soldier in the Polish Army, was apprehended by a Jew with a red armband and bearing a rifle who handed him over to the Soviets. As he was led into a courtyard packed with Polish soldiers, he was struck twice in the spine with the butt of a rifle.

In ***Lubieszów***, a gang of Jewish teenagers attacked and beat up a Polish officer as he was leaving church. Throughout this region, after seizing arms and organizing themselves into bands of "people's militia," Jews terrorized the local Polish officials and inhabitants and shot at and apprehended Polish soldiers driven back by the German forces.

On his discharge from the Polish army in Łuck, Volhynia, after the Soviet invasion, Zenobiusz Janicki made his way to his home town of ***Przebraże***, 25 km away. Individual and small groups of soldiers returning from the front were frequently set upon by Ukrainians and Jews and robbed, on occasion even killed. In Przebraże, Janicki witnessed how his Jewish neighbour Dawid Gilden, the proprietor of a grocery store who had attained the rank of corporal in the Polish army, accosted a Polish soldier on the road with a pistol and stole a blanket from him.

Aleksander Pluta, a company sergeant, was one of many soldiers who tried to make his way back home after being discharged from his unit near ***Równe***, in Volhynia.

> We headed toward Równe because there was a train station there. We tried to avoid the city so we followed paths in areas which were not built up. … However, near the city itself we had to enter its outskirts … There patrols formed of NKVD men and Jews awaited us. They were young and hated Poles. They captured Polish officers who tried to blend in. The Russians could not distinguish officers from soldiers. Jews were needed for that purpose. They also carried guns. Near the larger cities and in the centre of the cities Jews filled these functions themselves without Red Army men. Those they recognized as, or suspected of being, officers were led away somewhere farther. It was they [these officers] who were doubtless sent to Katyn and other death camps. We walked for several days and the same thing happened daily.

After surrendering their arms in Busk and receiving a pass to return to their homes, Polish soldiers were robbed of their bicycles, money and possessions en route by Ukrainian and Jewish bands and communist committees. After obtaining civilian clothes in a Polish settlement, they arrived in ***Włodzimierz Wołyński*** where they were arrested by Jews and delivered to the NKVD. Indeed, many Jews in that town donned red

armbands and rushed to help the NKVD identify targeted Poles and round them up. Poles tried to avoid the streets and often went into hiding for fear of being lynched.

Two young Polish officer cadets who were released from service after the Soviet entry and were making their way home attempted to board a train ***Łuck,*** Volhynia. That town was overrun with self-appointed Jewish militiamen on the lookout for Polish military men. They disarmed Polish soldiers and apprehended officers. The two Poles were accosted by a group of young Jews with red armbands who tore the Polish eagles off their caps while mocking them. A hunt for Polish officers in ***Kowel*** was undertaken by local Jews.

Similar reports come from ***Wiśniowiec,*** in Volhynia, and nearby ***Zbaraż*** where

> revolutionary committees were established consisting mostly of young Jews. In Polish uniforms and with red armbands, armed with rifles, they guard the buildings of their committees. They also stop soldiers and force them to enter the place. There they strip-search them, most often looking for arms, and they humiliate them with foul language.

But it was not just the young "emancipated" Jews, though hardly card-carrying members of the Communist party, who took part in spectacles like this repeated again and again throughout Eastern Poland. In ***Skałat***, a town near the Soviet border, on September 17th Orthodox Jews formed armed parties to chase down and apprehend Poles in anticipation of the Soviet entry.

> Groups of Orthodox Jews dressed in long, black or charcoal gaberdines with wide red armbands, their heads covered with black yarmulkas from which long side curls dangled, carried rifles with long bayonets. When an armed group like this ran their gaberdines flew open and from under their black vests stood out their white ziziths [tassels] which hung down. … On one of the side streets we saw this black band surround two Polish non-commissioned officers who were walking unarmed. Quite animated, the Jews led the apprehended men away. Polish army men captured in this manner were then delivered to Red Army men or the NKVD as soon as the Soviet army entered the town. Many of those apprehended by the Jewish militia later lost their lives in Katyn and other places of Soviet genocide. [Polish] policemen caught by the Jews were executed immediately by Red Army men.
>
> We encountered more and more of these organized groups in black gaberdines on the streets. We left Skałat in a hurry. … After columns of Soviet tanks rolled through the city without stopping and moved onward, the Jews, who were the largest group of residents of Skałat, formed their own Red militia. They apprehended and imprisoned Polish soldiers and policemen. They even prepared a joyful, official welcome to greet the armies of the Soviet aggressor when they entered the town. Skałat was thus taken over by Jewish irredentists.

In ***Złoczów,*** pieces of red cloth were hung from windows and balconies and Polish soldiers were fired at in the streets. Polish soldiers were apprehended and disarmed by Jewish communists and Ukrainians. On September 19th, Sergeant Jan Bernard Soliński of the Frontier Defence Corps and his colleagues were

ordered by a captain of the Red Army, a Jew, to leave the premises where they had taken refuge and to surrender their arms. A large and highly agitated crowd of Jews and Ukrainians surrounded the Poles. They were screaming and chanting and they threatened the Poles saying, "Your Poland has come to an end. We will now be in charge."

In ***Sasów,*** a small town near Złoczów, the newly formed militia, consisting of Ukrainians and Jews, apprehended more than twenty Polish soldiers and policemen and handed them over to the Soviet army. After a provocation (in which a grenade was thrown into the room in the school where they were held), the Poles were executed by the Soviets. One of the main organizers of the Red militia was Lipa Halpern, a prewar Communist, who was instrumental in the deportation of more than a dozen Polish families to the Gulag in February 1940. Later Halpern worked in the NKVD regional command in Olesko.

In ***Czortków,*** a Jewish and Ukrainian rabble followed Soviet soldiers around town disarming Polish officers and soldiers, whom they cursed and insulted verbally. The captured Poles were then driven to the jail.

In ***Nowe Brusno*** near Rawa Ruska, Abraham Starkman and his brother, whose father was a well-to-do Jewish farmer, took charge of the local workers' militia which disarmed Polish soldiers and executed a few Polish officers captured near that village.

In ***Jaryczów*** near Lwów,

> The little town was just going through its first spasm of revolution. Some Polish officers, described as "spies"—God knows on whose behalf—were arrested. The Ukrainian Nationalists formed a procession with flags and banners, which they followed through the streets, with revolvers in their hands. Young Jews formed another procession, with a red flag and a portrait of Stalin, carried exactly like a holy ikon. The two groups finally came face to face and quarrelled, with the result that they together looted the store of the Polish Spirits Monopoly. When everyone had got drunk, they wanted to organize a pogrom of the Poles in the town. Fortunately there were too many Poles to be safely attacked and in the meantime someone launched the rumour that the Germans were coming.
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> Instead of the Germans, two Bolshevik commissars arrived with a platoon of troops a few hours afterwards. The Ukrainian leaders turned meek and silent, as two of them had been arrested. The Jews all went home and sat tight there, while the Bolshevik commissar inquired about the local intelligentsia.

Conditions in ***Lwów*** were described by many witnesses: Polish soldiers, especially officers, were disarmed, abused verbally and physically, and hauled off by the Red militia, composed mostly of Jews and Ukrainians, and by ordinary citizens to Soviet posts. This base conduct toward fellow citizens sometimes elicited a feeling of disgust on the part of ordinary, decent Soviet soldiers.

> After the arrival of the Soviets in Lwów on September 23, 1939, I witnessed several incidents on the part of Jews toward Poles. The first was the welcome given to the arriving Soviet army. Jews

> seized weapons from Polish soldiers as they [the Jews] kicked and mocked them. They tied red ribbons to the barrels of stolen rifles and red armbands on their sleeves. I saw how one Polish soldier who was already disarmed was surrounded by a Jewish patrol consisting of three self-styled armed militiamen with red armbands on their sleeves (this took place just as the Soviet army was entering Lwów); they tore the military hat from his head and were jostling him around. At that time a Soviet patrol came by and when they saw what was happening, they disarmed the Jewish patrol, gave them a boot and told them to run off. It was a painful sight to see a disarmed Polish soldier being attacked by Polish Jews.

A group of Jews with red armbands dragged Lieutenant-Colonel Tadeusz Prauss, the commander of an airforce regiment, out of his house, pushing him around and beating him on his head and face. They thrust him in a carriage, paraded him publicly as an "enemy of the people" and spat at him. A uniformed Polish officer was captured on Meizels Street by two Jews with red armbands and rifles. After abusing him they led him to the Brygidki prison. A former student of the renowned Jewish scholar Hugo Steinhaus, by the name of Borek, was arrested in his home after being denounced to the NKVD as a reserve officer in the Polish army by his Jewish orderly. When Witold Rapf went to stay with his crippled uncle, an ex-colonel of the Polish army, in Lwów in November 1939,

> Two NKVD officers, accompanied by three young Jews wearing red armbands, came at night and arrested my uncle. They made offensive and disgracing remarks, pointing a to a painting of Jesus and a picture of Pilsudski. [Marshal Józef Piłsudski was Poland's dictator from 1926 until his death in 1935. He was head of state and commander-in-chief of the Polish army during the Polish-Soviet War of 1919–1920.]

Pointing out to the Soviets the direction of Polish troop movements and fleeing Polish soldiers became a common pastime. In ***Kuty*** near Kołomyja, the self-proclaimed Jewish militia quickly informed Soviet tank drivers that a Polish military truck had just departed for the nearby Romanian border. Unable to overtake it, the tank fired machine-gun volley at the truck killing a Polish quartermaster by the name of Tadeusz Dołęga-Mostowicz, a well-known Polish literary figure.

Near ***Śniatyn***, three Polish officers in plainclothes were apprehended crossing the River Prut to Romania in October 1939. They were detained and briefly imprisoned in Kołomyja before being deported to the Gulag. Their interrogations were carried out with the assistance of local Jews, among them a doctor, who acted as interpreters. In one case, the doctor himself levelled abuse at one of the Polish officers, who were accused of being spies, and called him a "liar." When he moved to strike the Polish officer, his over-zealousness was too much to bear for even the hardened Soviet functionaries, who then dispensed with the collaborator's services.

A Polish officer, disguised as soldier, was trying to make his way to the Polish-Hungarian border when he was apprehended by Ukrainian militiamen near the village of ***Skole***. Suspected of being a Polish officer, he was taken to the village and handed over to two Jewish militiamen who took him to the Soviet

commissar for questioning. A local Jewish woman, who acted as secretary, mistress and Russian interpreter for the commissar, "embellished [the officer's] confession with communist jargon obviously learned from propaganda leaflets." During his interrogation captured Polish state employees, policeman and gamekeepers were brought in by the militiamen, who carried out their duties with enthusiasm; the commissar sent them to the local prison. Since the officer had false identification, his guise of being a simple soldier was eventually accepted and he was released to go home.

On September 25th, the Soviets murdered the staff and patients of a Polish military hospital in the village of ***Grabowiec*** near Zamość. Some of the wounded soldiers were shot in the makeshift hospital, others who had difficulty walking were shot just outside the building. A group of about twenty soldiers were led to a hill on the outskirts of the village, pushed around and cursed by a group of young Jews with red armbands, and executed there. They are buried in a communal grave in the local cemetery.

A Polish soldier recalled with shock what he experienced and felt when the first Soviet soldiers arrived in the outskirts of ***Lwów***:

> About 5 p.m., we heard some unusual voices and a lot of noise on the street … I could not resist the temptation to go out and see what was happening. I observed a very strange scene: A small group of people—many of them Jews, and evidently Communists—were surrounding a lone and scared looking Soviet soldier and screaming anti-Polish slogans, "Down with the Polish government!! … Down with Poland!! … Long live the Soviet Union!!"
>
> I could not believe my eyes! Why would these people be so happy? Why would the Jews be against the Polish government and Poland itself? They had a very good life in Poland, and were free. With the exception of some small minority [of non-Jews], no one bothered them before the war. They were able to do whatever they wanted and most of them were well-to-do. What an unpleasant surprise it was for me to witness a scene like this. … I could not help but express my dismay and disgust when I turned to a tall, middle-aged man and asked him why these people were so happy. I didn't quite finish what I was going to say, when he turned to me menacingly and said in a loud voice: "Are you not happy, you S.O.B.?! I'll show you!" He then started towards me with his not-so-friendly intentions. Obviously I did not make him happy with my remarks and questions, but I could only rectify the situation by running away towards the bunker where I would feel safe with my friends.
>
> "My God! Where am I?! These people are traitors," I mumbled to myself for quite some time as a result of this unfortunate episode.

With the entry of the Soviets groups of young Jews wearing red armbands and armed with rifles and pistols appeared on the streets of ***Wilno***. According to one Jewish observer, they disarmed Polish soldiers "in an ugly manner and with great satisfaction. A Jew would spit in the face of a Polish soldier after taking his rifle." Another eyewitness reported:

> In the streets Jewish children latched on to Soviet military vehicles and joyfully greeted the new occupiers. Militia patrols with red armbands, formed mostly of Wilno Jews and Communists, were

> everywhere. I will never forget the sight of a Polish soldier walking down a street (apparently on his way home) without a belt and carrying a haversack. Suddenly a group of teenagers detached themselves from a Soviet truck and, undoubtedly wanting to demonstrate its fighting spirit and enmity toward the remnants of Polish statehood, spat at that emaciated soldier and tried to rip the buttons off his military coat. And—imagine this!—the reaction of the Soviet soldiers was entirely different from what that swarm of teenagers turned savage expected. They told them to leave the soldier in peace explaining, "He's just an ordinary soldier. Don't harass him." And that viperous and squalid group of callow youth left shamefaced.

The main train station in Wilno was a particularly hazardous place to venture since it was infested with NKVD agents and the largely Jewish citizens' militia, whose main task was to stop suspicious people, especially Polish officers out of uniform. Suspects were followed to their homes and their credentials were checked. Jews in the service of the Bolsheviks also carried out nighttime raids of suspect Polish homes to look for arms. About 80 percent of those arrested were Poles. Soviet reports sang the praises of the predominantly Jewish Workers' Guard who maintained "order" and confiscated weapons: "The mood among the members of the Workers' Guard is elated; they carry out every order willingly and with enthusiasm."

Numerous reports speak of the abusive treatment meted out to Polish prisoners of war by Jews in Eastern Poland. (This appears to have been a predilection of the Jewish minority, as there are no reports of Ukrainians or Belorussians taking part in such activities.) This conduct—reminiscent of the displays of hatred directed toward Polish prisoners of war by pro-Nazi German civilians—ranks among the most shameful episodes in occupied Europe and one about which Poles quite understandably retain bitter memories.

When a large crowd formed as the Soviets marched Polish prisoners of war along the highway to ***Monasterzyska*** near Buczacz, young Jewish hooligans who lined the street spat at the Polish soldiers and threw rocks at them. As one witness recalled, the Poles who came out to see their loved ones being led away were appalled by this callous conduct.

> They must have been encouraged by their parents to perform such base deeds. My mother could not stand by idly looking at this any longer and took them to task. When that did not help, she grabbed one of them by the collar and gave him a light jerk. All of a sudden, out of nowhere, some older Jews appeared with red armbands on their coats and wanted to push my mother into the convoy led by the Soviets. Some Ukrainian women we knew saved her and me by raising a terrible outcry. This must have frightened the Jews because they ran off. Unfortunately, the young Jews continued to hurl insults at our soldiers.
>
> These brief incidents stuck in my mother's mind for a long time. But that did not prevent her from sheltering Jews during the German occupation at risk to our lives. Perhaps among them were those who, in 1939, wanted to hand my mother over to the Soviets.

When the Soviets led captured Polish soldiers, with their hands tied behind their backs, through the streets of ***Skała Podolska,*** crowds of Jews and Ukrainians converged to observe the show, screaming at them: "Kill the Polish swines!" and "The Polish swine is dead!"

An eyewitness observed Jews jeering and spitting at disarmed Polish soldiers and policemen assembled in the courtyard of the police station in ***Stanisławów*** before being marched to the local jail. Many of the Jews who had lined Kamiński Street along with their children wore red armbands and publicly derided the Poles as they passed in front of them.

In ***Dolina*** near Stryj, where Jews greeted the invading Soviet army with flowers and offered them bread and salt (a traditional greeting), a Polish officer was slapped in the face by a local Jew, who screamed at him, "There will be no more Poland of the *Pans*."

The day after the Soviet entry into ***Dubno,*** Volhynia,

> Two young Jews, communist militiamen, brought out a couple of Polish officers, a colonel and a lieutenant, from a house. In the market-place, surrounded by a party of militiamen (of course all armed with rifles), stood a superior sort of commissar, a young fellow with a markedly Semitic cast of countenance. The officers were brought before him, whereupon he addressed a few words in Russian to the colonel—and slapped him hard in the face. The colonel took the blow in silence, with bowed head … Presently the commissar ordered the two officers to put up their hands, while they were searched and their belts taken from them.

The subsequent fate of the Polish officers is not indicated.

In some cases, however, Polish officers could not bear the public humiliation. A Polish woman recalled a scene she witnessed in ***Drużkopol,*** Volhynia, upon the Soviet entry:

> From a crowd of her own people [who had assembled to greet the Soviets] a young Jewish woman emerged. She approached a Polish officer and delivered a swinging blow to his face. … The Polish officer calmly pulled a gun out of his holster (creating a panic among the rabble), held it against his temple and pulled the trigger.

In ***Białozórka*** near Krzemieniec, the sight of long lines of Polish prisoners of war aroused provocative cries and laughter on the part of Jews and Ukrainians. The Polish captives were met by a group of young Jews, among them a young woman, who came out of the Polish state police building dressed in Polish military coats stripped of their shoulder-straps. Wearing red armbands they insulted and mocked the Polish officers from a distance: "You Polish swine. … Your rule is over. Take those roosters [a disparaging reference to Poland's national emblem, the white eagle] off your hats!" The first officer they struck was a general, whose hat went flying off into the mud as he was hit in the head. This was a signal for the young Jews to collectively ill-treat a group of Polish officers who had been separated from the column of prisoners of war.

K. T. Celny, a young Pole who accompanied his father, a major in the reserve of the medical corps of the Polish Army, encountered the following reception in the vicinity of ***Lwów***:

> As we approached every Ukrainian village, we were fired upon. In towns, we were also shot at by the Jewish militia, armed with stolen Polish army rifles and wearing red armbands. As we approached the outskirts of Lwów, we came upon a tragicomic spectacle: In a meadow beside the main road, about ten of the Jewish militiamen were guarding a sizable squadron of one of the elite Polish cavalry regiments. Soviet tank forces had disarmed the Polish regiment and had assigned their new "allies," the Jews, to guard the Poles. I recall a feeling of pain and disgust that those who were Polish citizens should behave so treacherously.

Another Polish soldier reported a similar occurrence in that region: "After my capture by Soviet troops in 1939 I was guarded by a Jewish militia, who often treated former Polish officers with the utmost brutality." According to Stanisław Karliński, the behaviour of the Jewish guards even occasioned interventions on the part of the Soviets.

Additional examples of the despicable behaviour of the Jewish masses of Lwów toward Polish prisoners of war, who were showered with abuse and whose eagles and military distinctions were torn from their uniforms, are noted by General Władysław Anders and others. Even former acquaintances could not be counted on for an act of kindness.

When Stanisław Milczarczyk, a reserve non-commissioned officer in the Frontier Defence Corps, was taken captive and held in a freight wagon full of Polish prisoners of war, he spotted a Jew by the name of Szmul from his native Ciechanów guarding the stationary train. He called out to Szmul, now an armed Red militiaman, to bring some water for the thirty prisoners. Enraged, Szmul rushed over to wagon, hurled insults at Milczarczyk, and jabbed at him with his bayonet. Just a short while ago Szmul had sold fruit to Milczarczyk, who owned a small grocer's shop in his home town.

Near ***Kostopol***, Volhynia, just before their execution by the Soviets,

> When the column was being marched through the town, the local Jews spat at the Polish soldiers, heaped the foulest epithets upon them, and threw rocks at them.

As a column of Polish prisoners of war was being led by Red Army men through the nearly empty streets of ***Włodzimierz Wołyński*** in the early morning hours, a young Jew mocked them yelling, "You sons-of-bitches. You'll now get what you deserve. It's good that they're taking you away." Some Polish women who stood nearby were in tears. The contrast was striking.

General Jan Lachowicz filed the following report about his internment in ***Kowel***, Volhynia:

> On September 28, we received orders to 'pack up' and leave our cells. In the prison yard we met up with most of the officers of our platoon and many others from various military formations. We were escorted in a column to the barracks by a civilian guard with red armbands and former Polish

> soldiers—unfortunately all of them were Polish Jews. We moved out … Our escort consisted of the same (Jews) with armbands and Polish rifles … After a time, a rabble of young Jews gathered on each side of our column, marching along with us on the sidewalks and shouting insults at us. What is worse, they soon began to spit at us and here and there even pelted our column with rocks.

In ***Zaleszczyki,*** near the Romanian border, a Polish prisoner of war recalled his fate, typical of many Polish soldiers:

> On September 19th, I was taken captive by the Bolsheviks. I was wounded and was taken to the hospital in Zaleszczyki. Our fate was horrible. The NKVD handed us over to Jews armed with rifles and guns. These were Polish Jews in civilian clothes with armbands. They treated the wounded soldiers with unusual brutality. They struck us and kicked us. They searched out officers and handed them over to the NKVD. They screamed at us that we were bourgeois lackeys who had sucked their blood, and that they would now suck our blood. They hurled many insults at us which I won't repeat because they were so vulgar. They heaped profanities on us.

Attitudes had not changed when bedraggled Polish prisoners were led in a column through Uman', in Soviet Ukraine, the following summer: "The sidewalks are full of Jews. Some of them yell at us: 'Polish *Pans.*' … They look at us with hostility."

The treatment of Polish prisoners of war by the ordinary Jewish civilian population of Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland has no parallel anywhere else in occupied Europe. At that time, in German-occupied Poland, Jews were not being hunted down in this manner (except by ethnic Germans, as a Jew from Łódź recorded on September 9: "Local German youths lie in ambush, waiting for passing Jews, mercilessly attacking them, snipping beards, plucking hair until blood flows, aglow with sadistic enjoyment at their wild sport."), but rather, like the Poles, faced random terror. There the plight of prisoners of war and refugees, regardless of nationality or religion, elicited widespread sympathy on the part of the Poles. As one Jew who served in the Polish army put it, "What an ideal brotherhood existed between Poles and Jews! … How generously and hospitably the Polish peasant received refugees!" (Among Jews in Eastern Poland, however, such solidarity rarely extended beyond offering relief to Jewish refugees from the German zone.)

Nor is there any record of Jewish captives being publicly harassed and abused by Poles, as Poles were in the Soviet zone. When Jews, whether soldiers or civilians, were interned or fled or were expelled from their homes by the Germans, many Poles came to their assistance. Moreover, there are numerous Jewish accounts from the German zone from this same period attesting to the fact that Jewish soldiers were frequently protected by their fellow Polish soldiers when asked to identify themselves by the Germans. (The vast majority of Jews in the Polish army did, however, identify themselves to the Germans as Jews. Their immediate fate did not prove to be worse than that of Polish soldiers—almost all of the Jews were soon released and allowed to return to their homes. On the other hand, many Polish soldiers were held in camps for the entire war.)

The hunt for and denunciation of Polish officers and officials by local collaborators did not subside with

the Soviet entry. It continued well into the Soviet occupation, as the following examples show.

Still making their way home to Volhynia in October 1939, two soldiers who had served in the Frontier Defence Corps were stopped by two Jewish militiamen armed with Polish rifles in ***Busk***, north of Lwów. Knowing the fate that awaited them in the local commissariat, they seized their rifles and gave the Jewish militiamen a good thrashing before escaping. One of the Poles could not remain for long in his home town of Klewań, or afterwards in Lwów, because of the vigilance of the NKVD and Jewish militias. He was eventually apprehended near ***Małkinia*** in March 1940 when he attempted to cross over to the German zone. While the Pole was interned in an NKVD prison, a young Jewish interpreter demonstrated great zeal in eliciting information from him in the course of his interrogation.

A group of fourteen members of the nascent Polish underground, the Union for Armed Struggle (Związek Walki Zbrojnej, the precursor of the Home Army), was arrested in ***Lwów*** in March and April 1940. After undergoing show trials, all but one of them were executed the following February. Their families were deported to the Soviet interior. The chief interrogator, who subjected them to brutal torture during their detention in Lwów, was a Jew by the name of E. M. Libenson (Liebenson), a senior lieutenant of the NKVD. Libenson's name also appears in other prisoners' accounts as a sadistic torturer.

A Pole whose remnant group of the defeated Polish army was captured by the Soviets as late as February 1940, recalled his imprisonment in ***Białystok*** and ***Brześć nad Bugiem*** where he was told by a Jewish major of the NKVD that Poland would never rise again. The mood among the jailers, on learning of the defeat of France in June of that year, was indicative of which side and what values they were rooting for:

> The joy of the NKVD, consisting mostly of the Jews who interrogated us, was indescribable. They were elated. The Soviet Union would now divide Europe with Hitler. … Elated they drank for several days into a state of unconsciousness. That for us was the most difficult time. All hope had evaporated.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Persecution and Murder of Polish Policemen, Officials, Political Figures, Landowners, Clergymen, and Settlers

Numerous testimonies attest to the prominent role played by Jews in the militias and revolutionary committees that sprung up both spontaneously and at Soviet urging. These entities often played a decisive part in getting the new regime and its machinery of repression off the ground. Their activities were buttressed by large numbers of individual collaborators acting on their own initiative in furtherance of the Soviet cause.

Throughout Eastern Poland, local Jewish, Belorussian and Ukrainian Communists formed militias and revolutionary committees. With the blessing of the Soviet invaders, they apprehended, robbed, and even murdered Polish officials, policemen, teachers, politicians, community leaders, landowners, and "colonists" (i.e. interwar settlers)—the so-called enemies of the people. They also plundered and set fire to Polish property and destroyed Polish national and religious monuments. Scores of murders of individuals and groups have been recorded. Robbery of Polish property took on massive proportions with the spoils enriching the collaborators' families and their communities.

One of the earliest and most hideous crimes was the murder of almost as many as fifty Poles in the village of ***Brzostowica Mała*** near Grodno around September 20th, before the Soviets were installed in the area. A pro-Communist band with red armbands and armed with blades and axes, led by a Jewish trader by the name of Ajzik, entered the village, dragged people out of their houses screaming, and cruelly massacred the entire Polish population. The victims included Count Antoni Wołkowicki and his wife Ludwika, his brother-in-law Zygmunt Woynicz-Sianożęcki, the county reeve and his secretary, the accountant, the mailman, and the local teacher. The victims of this orgy of violence were tortured, tied with barbed wire, pummelled with sticks, forced to swallow quicklime, thrown into a ditch and buried alive. The paralyzed Countess Ludwika Wołkowicka was dragged to the execution site by her hair. The murder was ordered by Żak Motyl, a Jew who headed the revolutionary committee in Brzostowica Wielka which was composed of Jews and Belorussians. Typically, the culprits were never punished. On the contrary, the NKVD officers praised them for their "class-conscious" actions, and Ajzik was made the president of the local cooperative. The racist aspect of the crime, however, is undeniable: only members of the Polish minority perished at the hands of their non-Polish neighbours.

Janusz Brochowicz-Lewiński, an officer cadet who attained the rank of corporal in 1939, was captured by the Soviets near ***Stołpce.*** He was one of fifteen Poles, among them a judge, a pastor, a chaplain, a teacher, and several civil servants, taken before an NKVD tribunal in groups of five and sentenced to death. Fortunately, his group managed to escape while being transported to their unknown execution site. The other ten condemned Poles were executed by firing squad. While Brochowicz-Lewiński was imprisoned in

Stołpce, an NKVD officer made the rounds in the company of his aide, a local Jew who identified the members of the Polish educated class, now the so-called enemies of the people, among whom he had lived for years, by their occupation: judge, teacher, policeman, civil servant, forest-ranger, landowner.

Equally despicable were the murders of Catholic clergymen carried out by roving gangs of Jews and Belorussians such as that of Rev. Bronisław Fedorowicz, the pastor of ***Skrundzie*** near Słonim, and those of Rev. Antoni Twardowski, pastor of ***Juraciszki*** near Wołożyn, and the latter's cleric, the Jesuit Stanisław Zuziak. A rabble of pro-Soviet Jews and Belorussians came to apprehend Rev. Józef Bajko, the pastor of ***Naliboki*** near Stołpce, intending either to hand him over to the Soviet authorities or to possibly lynch him (as had been done in other localities). A large gathering of parishioners foiled these plans, allowing Rev. Bajko to escape before the arrival of the NKVD.

Henryk Poszwiński, the prewar mayor of ***Zdzięcioł***, a town near Nowogródek, described the new order in his town:

> In Zdzięcioł a Jewish woman by the name of Josielewicz stood at the head of the revolutionary committee which was organized even before the arrival of the Soviet army.
>
> The local police left town just after the Red Army had crossed the border. On the evening of September 17th, I was informed that a band of criminals released from jail was getting ready to rob some stores. I called a meeting of the fire brigade and civilian guard and these two organizations began to provide security in our town. The stores were spared but the [criminal] bands attacked the defenceless civilians who were escaping eastward from the Germans. The culprits stripped them of their clothes, shoes and anything else they had on them. Those who resisted were cruelly killed on the spot. Outside the town, roadside ditches were strewn with dead people. … The revolutionary committee, which soon disarmed the fire brigade and civilian guard, stood by idly while all this was taking place.
>
> In the morning hours of September 18th, a small detachment of the Polish army still traversed Zdzięcioł. It was a field hospital team transported in a dozen or so horse-drawn carriages. The convoy consisted of thirty soldiers led by a sergeant. The revolutionary committee attempted to stop and disarm them. The soldiers discharged a volley of gunfire into the air. The revolutionary committee ran out of town in a stampede and hid in the thickets of the municipal cemetery. …
>
> In the afternoon hours of September 18th, the Soviet army entered Nowogródek. That evening the first three Soviet tanks arrived in Zdzięcioł. The entire revolutionary committee, headed by Josielewicz, came out to greet the invaders shouting: "Long live the great Stalin!" After a short stop the tanks moved toward Słonim. The revolutionary committee ordered owners to display red flags from their houses. The Poles cried like children as they tore the white portion off the [red and white] Polish flags. …
>
> In the morning hours of September 19th, a Jew from the revolutionary committee came to the town hall and advised me that I was being summoned by the committee to attend a meeting concerning an epidemic of foot-and-mouth disease which had broken out among some cattle that had been brought to Zdzięcioł. Believing what I had been told to be true, I immediately got up from my desk and accompanied that man to the headquarters of the committee located at the other end of

town. I had to wait about an hour before I was taken to the chairwoman's office. During that time I observed the true picture of the "revolution." Hundreds of people surrounded the committee premises; most of them were women who had broken out in tears and were wailing. "Return our stolen property!" they cried. "Release our husbands and fathers of our children!" …

People who had been badly beaten occupied the corners of the room; most of them were refugees fleeing the Germans. The committee members, who were dressed in civilian clothes with red armbands and had Soviet stars on their hats, carried rifles or revolvers in their hands and competed with each other in brutally mistreating these people. It was a sight that I had difficulty countenancing.

After about an hour's wait the door was thrown open and I was summoned into the chairwoman's office. When I entered I noticed three rifle barrels pointed at me. One of the bandits yelled, "Hands up!" I raised my hands and turned to the chairwoman. "What have I done wrong? Why are you treating me like this?" Although she knew Polish well, Josielewicz replied in Russian, "You will find out in due course." …

After being searched [and stripped of all my personal effects] I was instructed to move toward the table occupied by Josielewicz, the chairwoman, and by a Soviet NKVD officer. The officer removed a form from his bag and started to complete it. … The last portion of the form asked for the reason for my arrest and imprisonment. Before filling it out, the NKVD officer turned to the chairwoman and asked what to enter. The chairwoman replied, "He's a Polish officer, a Polish patriot, the former mayor of the town. That's probably reason enough." The NKVD officer wrote in this portion: "Dangerous element."

After filling out this form, three committee members escorted me to police detention. In a small detention room built to hold no more than four people for a short period, there were twenty-three people who had been arrested. Unable to sit down in that crowded place, we had to stand one next to another the whole time. People fainted from lack of air and had to relieve themselves on the spot. Among those arrested were school principals, county reeves, village administrators, officials and various other people who had escaped eastward from the Germans, as well as a priest who often repeated under his breath, "Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do."

We spent almost an entire day in this place of detention. Finally, on September 20th, we were put in a truck and taken to the jail in Nowogródek. During the entire journey, which lasted more than an hour, we were lying on the floor of the truck used to transport coal while four Jews from the revolutionary committee watched over us with rifles in their hands. Every now and then one of them would warn us, "Don't lift your heads, or you'll get a bullet in your skull."

Along the road over which the truck moved slowly we encountered in many places Soviet artillery going in the opposite direction. Soviet soldiers would approach our vehicle during the stops and ask, "Who are you carrying and where are you going?"

"We're taking Poles to the jail," the guards would answer.

"What have they done wrong?"

"They haven't done anything. It's enough that they're Poles!"

In ***Baranowicze***, Jews filled the ranks of the Red militia and denounced Polish officers, policemen, teachers, and government officials to the NKVD. At night black box-like carriages arrived at the homes of these people. They were loaded on and taken to the train station, from where they were deported to the Gulag never to be heard from again. Among those arrested with the assistance of local Jews was the sister of Bogusław J. Jędrzejec and eight members of her family. Her husband and father were murdered by the NKVD in Baranowicze; the rest of the family was deported to the Soviet interior in the winter of 1939–1940.

According to Nachum Alpert, in ***Słonim***,

> A provisional city administration was organized in Slonim, headed by Matvei Kolotov, a Jew from Minsk. …
>
> Kolotov immediately began organizing a "Workers Guard" (a temporary militia) whose function was to maintain order in the city. Heading this Guard was Chaim Chomsky, a veteran Communist. …
>
> … And no sooner did the NKVD arrive than it made itself felt everywhere. First they deported merchants, manufacturers, Polish officers and police; then Bundists, Zionists, Trotskyites and Polish "colonists" and "kulaks" from the villages. Many inncocent people were caught in this dragnet.

According to Polish sources, Chaim Chomsky (Chomski), who took charge of the revolutionary committee, issued a direction to have the Polish mayor Bieńskiewicz arrested when he reported to work on September 18; afterwards, all traces of the mayor disappeared. A Jew soldier in the Polish army who found himself in Słonim for a brief period in September 1939 claims that the only Jews who collaborated with the Soviet invaders were long-time Communists: "I don't deny that there were Jews—old-time Communists—who disarmed Polish detachments," but adds, quite correctly, "but can one blame this on all the Jews?"

In ***Duniłowicze***, a small town near Postawy, a Jewish woman by the name of Chana led Soviet soldiers to the home of her neighbour, Józef Obuchowski, a sergeant of the Frontier Defence Corps. Pointing to his wife she said, "This is a Polish *Pani* [lady—the feminine of *Pan*], her husband is in the military." The soldiers tore apart the house looking in vain for her husband, the sergeant. The Polish woman was taken away instead. During her interrogation, which lasted twenty-four hours, she was forced to keep her hands raised and was drenched with water until she passed out.

Another Polish *Pani*, Mrs. Kwiatkowska, was arrested by the Jewish Committee on her estate near the towns of ***Wołożyn*** and ***Wiszniew*** soon after the Soviet army passed through. The *de facto* local authority rested with such groups which had sprung up like mushrooms. It was they who led the Soviet officials to their prey. Mrs. Kwiatkowska endured Soviet prisons until the end of 1949.

Witold Rozwadowski and his father were arrested on their estate near ***Kucewicze.*** The former was held interned in Oszmiana, where he was murdered by a Jewish colleague who had joined the Soviet militia.

In ***Oszmiana,***

> The temporary authorities consisted of Jews and Communists … who proclaimed themselves the commissars of the town. Power was exercised with the help of the militia consisting for the most part of Jews and Communists. The Jews and Communists served the Bolsheviks through denunciations out of spite and by betraying soldiers and police out of uniform. … The militia was the terror of the population because individual militiamen competed with each other in their servility.

In ***Nowa Wilejka***,

> The positions of authority were filled solely by Jews and Soviet citizens, who were very well provided for in every respect by the Soviet authorities. The latter also oversaw the agitators, who had at their disposal Jews and local riff-raff. The Soviet authorities issued the following directives: agitation centres were established, the so-called agitpunkts, and a large number of agitators, mostly Jews, were brought in from Soviet Russia.
>
> They were ordered to hold meetings of the local riff-raff with Communist leanings, former prisoners and Jews in order to prepare them to help out. They were ordered to hold meetings at which all things Polish, the Polish system, and the Polish government were criticized and condemned and Polish patriots were mocked. The public was called on to denounce such people because they were dangerous for the Soviets, to arrest them, and to deport them. The [Polish] public was not receptive and even replied with a furor: what for? All of these insults and demands came from the mouths of Soviet agitators and Jews.
>
> These meetings were generally compulsory and those who did not attend faced repercussions. …
>
> Mass searches were carried out at the homes of former military men, policemen and civil servants, and those people who were thought to be harmful to the Soviet Union were arrested.
>
> The searches and arrests all took place only at night; they were carried out by the police which was always overseen by the NKVD. Hardly anyone came out of such a search whole; someone from the entire family inevitably fell victim to it. Very often during the searches they seized documents, money, valuables, photographs of former military men and policemen, and important papers, all of which simply disappeared. The searches were entirely pro forma because these people were already judged (found guilty) in advance, for the most part by the Jewish Communists. After these people were arrested examinations and investigations followed, and the most incredible confessions were extracted from them as a result of all sorts of repressions and torture. That was their sole and favourite goal: the destruction and wreaking rage upon the Poles. In order to extract additional information about those Poles who still enjoyed their freedom, apart from formal investigations, Jewish Communists were planted in prison cells to investigate and to extract such information from their victims.
>
> For example, one night a group of Poles was arrested by local Jews overseen by the NKVD. The victims were then examined and investigated using "light torture" methods such as hitting on the head, while it was covered with cardboard, with the spine of a book or a heavy book or a rubber club. After such investigations people walked around half-dazed, lost consciousness briefly, or even lost their minds. Many of my friends fell into this category, for example, Krawczyk, the

headman of the Polish state in Nowa Wilejka, Second Lieutenant Zygmunt Pióko, in the active service of the Third Combat Battalion Wilno, also from Nowa Wilejka, and many others. The former could not endure it and died; Piórko latter suffered a nervous disorder of the brain and went insane. …

At this time they ordered the compulsory registration of the population and the issuance of temporary identity documents or attestations for which the population was afraid to go and show themselves to the Soviet authorities, at whose side local Jews sat as clerks and provided an opinion about every Pole who came to register.

Many Poles resided there or hid without registering, which also increased the number of those arrested and the new victims of torture. After fulfilling all of the orders of the Soviet authorities and packing part of the Polish population into jail as a hostile element for the Soviets, they quickly embarked on their next task, pre-election agitation, which took place on a wide scale. A large number of agitators were sent from Soviet Russia, and these gathered the local riff-raff to help out, such as Jews and former prisoners, not only political ones but also others. They started to convoke all sorts of meetings, which were compulsory under threat. …

On the scheduled meeting days agitators were dispatched to workplaces. They called a break in the work or an earlier quitting time and led everyone to the place where the meeting was to take place, advising them in advance that no one was to be missing. … Meetings held on days off work … or those announced by written notices were doomed. … only Jews and some poorly educated children came. …

Every meeting was graced by a large cordon of uniformed and undercover police, as well as by the local Jewish population. … the agitators kept repeating that they would take care of the resisters. …

The agitators and Jews frequently raised all sorts of nonsense about General Sikorski [the leader of Poland's government in exile] and the former Polish government. They said that one should get out of one's head the notion that liberation would come from General Sikorski or from England or from anyone else. At this the Jews, agitators and militia replied with applause … The [Polish] population sat there silently without giving any signs of life.

A committee was set up to draw up electoral lists. For the most part Jews were assigned to the committee; they went from house to house and registered everyone eighteen and over. For example, to my wife's parents came two Jewish women, accompanied by an agitator, a young Jew from Wilno, to register them. …

In order to win more people over to their side, they ordered the redistribution of land seized from [Polish] settlers and wealthy landholders to labourers, poor farmers and Jews … Only the Jews willingly took the land given to them …

Premises were designated, the city was divided up into regions and an electoral committee was struck. The electoral committee consisted mainly of Jews, some members of the local riff-raff and Soviet agitators, many of whom were Jews too. …

The polling stations were manned by Jews, the families of Soviet agitators, and others. The elections got underway. The mood of the [Polish] population was gloomy.

> The polling stations were full of Soviet agitators, politruks [political commissars], uniformed and undercover police, as well as Jews and NKVD. A large number of Soviet soldiers and automobiles were assigned to help out. …
>
> [Because many Poles were evading] late in the evening the agitators, Soviet soldiers, NKVD and Jews set out in automobiles to collect eligible voters from their homes and drive them to cast their votes. …
>
> Up until the last moment they did not inform us officially of the fact that there was a plebiscite and the actual purpose of the voting [namely, to sanction the incorporation of seized Polish territory into the Soviet Union—*M.P.*], thus everyone [i.e. the Poles] considered this to be a big joke, because voting for unknown people and unknown purposes was absurd. Even though it was forbidden to cross things off or to make changes on the ballots, there was a lot of crossing out. Any voter who made some inappropriate gesture with his ballot was observed and noted by the agitators. … A few weeks after the elections, searches, arrests, repressions and torture recommenced again on a large scale, as well as the deportation of the Polish population to the so-called polar bear country.

A Polish woman recalls how the shopkeeper Rumkowa's son, her Jewish neighbours who knew the townspeople well, helped the Soviets round up and arrest targeted Poles in Nowa Wilejka. When the Germans arrived in 1941 and the Lithuanian police started to harass the Jews, this same Jewish shopkeeper bemoaned what was happening to the Jews. The Polish woman then reminded the shopkeeper of how her own son had behaved when the Bolsheviks arrived. Embarrassed, the Jewish woman hung her head in silence.

In ***Białystok,*** the NKVD utilized the members of the largely Jewish citizens' committee, which was formed before the entry of the Red Army, to create a workers' militia armed with weapons confiscated from Polish soldiers. The militia carried out huge numbers of searches in Polish homes. As one witness reports, "They looked for weapons in every nook and cranny. If they found anything made of gold, such as rings and bracelets, they took it for their own use, and if one offered resistance, they were threatened with death."

A pro-Communist committee made of Jews, which was led by Awraam Łaznik, seized control of the town of ***Sokółka***, north of Białystok. The Red militia, composed of local Jews (many of them Bund members, and an aggressive cobbler by the name of Gołdacki) and headed by Szymon Aszkiewicz, a reserve officer of the Polish army, arrested many Polish officials and prominent local Poles and executed three Polish policemen. They conducted numerous raids, looking for arms and seizing radio receivers and photo cameras. A Jewish blacksmith named Abel Łabędych shot a Polish policeman in the nearby village of ***Bogusze***, on September 24.

A head forester named Łabecki was summoned to a Soviet post established in the town of Sokółka. He was kicked and beaten by armed Jews wearing red armbands. Devastated by this brutal treatment he took his life by throwing himself under a train. His wife and six-year-old son were deported to Irkutsk in the winter in 1940.

Stefan Kurowski had better luck when he was stopped on his bicycle on a highway on the outskirts of ***Łapy,*** west of Białystok, by a Jewish militiaman. Fanatically consumed by his new role, this young Jew burst into a long tirade against the *Pans'* Poland whose "oppression" of the Jews he was now avenging as an enforcer of Soviet authority. Having nearly fallen into a trance as a result of his political agitation, this militiaman, less aggressive and brutal than most, seemed to have forgotten why he had stopped Kurowski in the first place and allowed him to continue on his way. While their military incompetence was also commented on by others, the local Jewish militia later proved to be an extremely useful tool for the Soviet occupiers in carrying out tasks such as stealing the church bell and preparing lists of Poles for deportation.

Aleksander Gawrychowski, the former township administrator (*wójt*), was seized from his home in the small town of ***Wizna*** near Łomża by Jewish militiamen at the beginning of October 1939 on charges of being an armed supporter of the Polish authorities. More arrests and interrogations of alleged Polish conspirators took place the next day: Jerzy Blum, Stanisław Drozdowski, Jan Kadłubowski, Piotr Nitkiewicz and Stanisław Gawrychowski. Among the interrogators were the brothers Chaim and Avigdor Czapnicki, prewar Zionists. Other Jewish militiamen from this small locality included: Abraham Birger, Lejzor Kiwajko, Kałmaniewicz, and Chaim Węgierko.

A Jewish woman from Ostrów Mazowiecka who relocated to the nearby village of ***Króle Duże,*** where she worked in milk depot, recalled excellent relations with the villagers. She treated the Poles with compassion, intervening on their behalf and warning them of inspections. However, as she points out, not all Jews were like that.

> There were Jews in this same village and in others who denounced peasants during Soviet rule, and later paid for it dearly when German rule came. I did not squeeze peasants for milk, I tried to accommodate them. … All the peasants in the village of Króle Duże knew me and they all respected me. I felt safe and good among them. Often I did not remember that I was a Jewish woman.

In ***Supraśl,*** according to a Jewish source,

> Some of the Jews, including Toleh Kagan, Baruch Gamzu and even Arke Rabinowitz, the Rabbi's son received permission to carry arms. … One day, Issar, the decorator's son Itzik, burst into the priest's house with a gun and stole a radio.

In Polesia, Count Henryk Skirmunt and his sister left their manor house in Mołodów near Drohiczyn Poleski on September 17th, hoping to escape the Soviets. When passing through the nearby Jewish hamlet of ***Motol,*** their automobile was stopped and they were detained by a group of Jewish Communist sympathizers. Not only did their Jewish neighbours fail to come to their assistance, but they prevented their escape. Shortly thereafter both of them were executed.

A Polish high school student from ***Brześć nad Bugiem*** (Brest Litovsk) recalled:

> The Germans first occupied Brześć on September 15, 1939, but already by the end of the month the Red Army entered, greeted enthusiastically by the Jewish community with bread and salt and flowers … From that time we Poles often heard slurs and threats directed against us … I will never forget the sight of a Polish policeman, led in handcuffs by policemen along Jagiellońska Street, who was surrounded by Jews howling and spitting at him, throwing rubbish and stones at him, and disparaging him cruelly.

The Jewish militia seized the brother of Feliks Starosielec from his high school in Brześć. He was arrested, charged and promptly executed. A Polish woman and her young daughter were shot and robbed by a mixed Jewish-Ukrainian patrol in the village of ***Wołynka***, near the railway line to Włodawa. In ***Janów Poleski***, Stanisław Doliwa-Falkowski, a landowner, was sheltered by friendly Jews only to be apprehended and executed by the local Red militia, composed largely of Jews.

According to a Jewish source, in ***Pińsk,*** Basey Giler, a Jewish member of the Communist Party, recognized the Polish Minister of Justice, Czesław Michałowski, and pointed him out to the workers' guard who promptly arrested him. The reaction of the Jewish population to the fate of Polish officials is described by Julius Margolin:

> First, the officials of the original Polish government disappeared before our eyes. Nobody was concerned, however, and I doubt if a second thought was given to their fate. Yet the method at work, typically Bolshevik, required not merely their dismissal, but their liquidation *in toto.* Thus they disappeared without leaving a trace.

In ***Sarny***, in Volhynia, local Jews armed with handguns, accompanied by a few Soviet soldiers, marched Polish policemen in groups of five to their place of execution in a nearby forest. During the ordeal the Jews spat at the policemen and called them derogatory names.

A Jew by the name of Herszko from ***Jagodzin*** near Luboml warned a Pole he knew: "You Poles are already all in a sack; all that remains to be done is to tie it up." At the beginning of October 1939, a telegram was dispatched to Stalin, signed by 70 Jews from ***Luboml***, thanking the Soviet dictator for "liberating" Volhynia and beseeching him to hold them close to his heart.

In ***Jarosławicze*** near Łuck,

> It started with individual cases—arrests and disappearances, especially of Poles. Great help and great zeal in making all sorts of denunciations to the NKVD was shown by the Jews.

The predominantly Jewish Communist militia seized control of the town of ***Łuck*** on September 18th and killed a Polish policeman. A Polish officer who had taken refuge in that city was fortunate enough to escape from the clutches of the Jewish militiaman who had attempted to arrest him on the street. Other Polish soldiers were not so lucky. As Herman Kruk recalls,

> The day after the entry of the Bolsheviks, groups of the new militia disarmed Polish soldiers. A Jewish fellow stopped a high profile Polish officer and challenged him to give him his weapon. The officer gave his revolver, which he carried on his belt. Finally, the young militiaman began removing the medals from the officer. The officer complained that he couldn't take them from him. The fellow threatened him with the rifle. The officer then took another revolver out of a holster and shot the militiaman on the spot. The officer was arrested.

The officer in question was doubtless executed summarily by the Soviets, as was their practice. There is no question, however, except perhaps for a die-hard Communist or an ardent Jewish nationalist, as to who was the hero and who was the traitor in this black-and-white scenario. Once the Soviets were installed, Polish officials were brought before a field court-martial at which a Jewish law student by the name of Ettinger, the commander of the Workers' Guard, acted as the local adviser. Proffering opinions about those marked for execution, Ettinger in effect sealed their fate.

In ***Berezno***,

> The many Ukrainians and members of the Jewish poorer classes who spontaneously greeted the Red Army soldiers started to show their enmity toward the Poles, who were in the minority. They searched for Polish officials and civil servants and for escapees from the western and central regions who had sought refuge from the Germans, and pointed them out to the NKVD. Massive arrests of those fingered and deportations followed.

In ***Dubno***, on September 17th, local Jews spontaneously formed a militia which apprehended the reeve, Bartłomiej Poliszczuk, a Ukrainian who loyally fulfilled his duties to the Polish state. He was eventually handed over to the Soviets, never to be heard from again. (His name has appeared on a list of executed Polish officials released by the Russian authorities.) Not realizing how efficient their Jewish fifth column was, a few days later the NKVD came looking for Poliszczuk at his home; his name had been put on a list, prepared by local Communists, of Polish officials earmarked for arrest.

In ***Krzemieniec***, a self-styled Jewish militia disarmed the citizens' guard formed by students from the lyceum. A Pole from Krzemieniec recalled:

> When I went out on the streets that day, numerous patrol units, militiamen composed of Jews, were circling the streets. They walked about with red armbands and guns, searching whoever they encountered. There were few Soviet troops. Only in the days that followed did the Soviet divisions march through the city.

The events and mood in Krzemieniec were vividly captured in the memoirs of Janina Sułkowska, the daughter of the county secretary, Jan Sułkowski, whose ultimate fate is described later on.

> The Poles watched the Soviet invaders with a mixture of revulsion and fear. Not a few of us cried. But as disconcerting was the emergence of a local Jewish militia which was friendly to the Red

Army and had made its appearance even *before* the enemy had marched in. Armed and organized its first task was to arrest the students and Boy Scouts who had been posted as guards and who carried old carbines in some cases taller than them. The Jews roughed up the shocked youngsters who had considered their captors as friends and classmates, before turning them over to the Soviets from whom they had prior directions. What was the fate of those young Poles? In many cases torture and death. This Jewish militia would help carry out the Soviet's dirty work during their occupation. My family would fall victim to them.

In town, Jews and Ukrainians were cheering and ingratiating themselves with the Soviets. I recognized many neighbours and acquaintances among those who were now jostling Poles and eyeing their property for future theft. Jewish men offered gifts to the Russians while their wives and daughters kissed their tanks. Among this rabble were criminals released from jail by the Soviets to create mayhem. They were all emboldened by posters that had suddenly appeared urging various groups to attack Poles with axes and scythes. And the Soviet officers indicated they would not stand in the way of slaughter which was already turning the countryside red with the blood of the Polish minority outnumbered by Ukrainians and Jews.

On that day I had my first encounter with a swaggering group of traitors attired in leather jackets, red armbands or sashes, stolen pistols, and hatred in their eyes. I beheld a number of classmates among them, including girlfriends. These mostly young Jews, often well-educated and from rich or religious families, now addressed everyone as "comrade." One of them gestured a slash across the throat at me. Their love for Communism and Joseph Stalin would know no bounds—especially human sacrifice. They were much worse than the blackmailers and denouncers who emerged in great numbers among the Jews and who were interested in the goods and jobs of their Polish victims.

Starting as communist sympathisers who flocked to the militia or acted as informers, these political types would soon graduate into "agitators," administrators and even sadistic interrogators for the Soviets as they filled positions in the new order. A knowledge of the language and the local scene, combined with their fanaticism, would be essential to the NKVD's reign of terror; they eagerly compiled lists and arrested Poles—and Jews, whom they considered to be enemies of the state. They were the ones who on horseback would chase my father down the main street like an animal, to act as interpreter for their torture victims.

A sizable minority of Polish Jews from all levels collaborated, usually passively but often actively, with the Soviet occupiers in their liquidation of Poles in eastern Poland in 1939–1941. For many, including my kin, the last sight they had of Poland or of their loved ones, was a cattle train bound for Siberia—and a Jew or a Ukrainian, or both, with a rifle on every wagon.

The Jewish militia from the Jewish village of Osowa and the Ukrainian militia from Mydzk, the harbingers of the new Soviet order, wasted no time descending on the Polish settlement of ***Ożgowo*** and others near Huta Stepańska to carry out arrests of targeted Poles.

The attitude of the Jewish population changed overnight in ***Kąty*** near Krzemieniec. The better goods were hidden away in their shops and they became "vulgar and insulting" toward Poles. They openly ridiculed the Polish government and social institutions, and made life difficult for the Poles.

> Young Jews entered the militia and in that capacity came to our village and beat up some officer trainees (Romek Kucharski and others) for their alleged crimes (as former members of the Officers' Training Corps "Strzelec").

In ***Równe***,

> In the newly formed militia, which engaged members of the local population, there were very many Jews. Undoubtedly the auxiliary apparatus of the NKVD, and thus agents of all kinds, also took in many of them.
>
> The local population—Jews and Ukrainians—helped the Soviets a great deal … They chased down Polish patriots and handed them over to the NKVD.

According to a Jewish witness,

> The day after the entry of the Soviet army into Równe, … enraged mobs recruited from those elements who were always ready to loot … began to demand that the "exploiters", bourgeoisie and local "Pans" be punished. Armed with weapons and sticks they started to drag the guilty out of offices, stores and private houses. The first victims were employees of the courts, the public prosecutor's office and the police. They were led down the middle of the street under the barrel of rifles, surrounded from all sides and accompanied by a shower of profanities. Apparently this was supposed to be the revolutionary element of the oppressed national minorities of the Ukraine. On the sidewalks one could see functionaries discretely maintaining order.
>
> The following day, the revolutionary element of armed civilians vanished imperceptibly from the streets of the city, and in their place appeared the organs of order … Thus began the systematic and precisely planned process of plucking out from society those people who were recognized as enemies of the Soviet regime.

Among the many Polish officials arrested in Równe were: Dezydery Smoczkiewicz, a deputy to the Seym (Poland's Parliament); Tadeusz Dworakowski, a former senator; five judges of the District Court; and the deputy prosecutor. All of them were later murdered. Two assistant prosecutors were also arrested. One of the principal denouncers was an articling student, the son of a well-to-do local Jewish family. These harsh measures did not dampen the enthusiasm of young Jews for the Soviet regime: whenever a picture of Stalin appeared on the screen in the local cinema they stood and howled ecstatically.

In ***Aleksandria*** near Równe, Jews and Ukrainians formed a militia and disarmed the Polish police in anticipation of the arrival of the Soviets. The militia also invaded the estate of Prince Lubomirski, who was executed. In ***Włodzimierz Wołyński***, local Communists and Jews were quick to denounce local officials, who soon disappeared without a trace.

A young Pole who was apprehended in ***Różyszcze*** on September 24 when he tried to obtain a pass to Kowel described his encounter with his interrogator as follows:

> The whole thing became complicated when we were taken before the commissar himself. He was a young Jew with a red star in his lapel. He started a regular interrogation … that I was surely a student, I surely belonged to the ONR [National Radical Camp], had beaten Jews, etc.

In ***Huta Pieniacka*** near Zborów, a self-styled militia consisting of four Ukrainians and two Jews took over the police station and post office. They donned red armbands and carried out arrests in anticipation of the arrival of the Soviets.

A militia consisting mostly of Jews soon appeared on the streets of ***Tarnopol.*** Dressed in Polish military coats and armed with Polish rifles, they entered homes searching for those who were now wanted by the new authorities. The jails were filled and executions abounded:

> While descending to the first floor level, we saw five Polish officers being led by Soviet soldiers out of an unrented, unfurnished apartment where the officers had slept the night before. We followed them to the street. … A few moments later, we saw the five officers lined up against the wall of a small white house under the bridge and shot dead by an impromptu firing squad. …
>
> Two Polish uniformed railroad men escorted by the Soviets passed us, followed by two escorted mail carriers. Seconds later, we heard a volley of shots. All were executed on the same spot where the five officers had been executed.

A Polish official (a former mayor of Łódź), a socialist who had found temporary refuge in the home of a local Jewish doctor, recalled:

> At that time the Communists fulfilled the most shameful role. They not only formed a "fifth column," but also were the veritable right hand of the NKVD in their war against the socialists and Polish political activists. They especially denounced members of the Polish Socialist Party and Bund. Alarmed by the arrests that had begun in town, after about a week our hosts advised us to go to some smaller county town where it would be easier to hide out for a time.

When pro-Soviet Jews spread rumours that Polish officers shot at Soviet soldiers from the bell tower of the Dominican church in Tarnopol, the Soviets opened fire and set the church ablaze causing serious damage to the building and its contents. Clergy from the monastery were arrested and almost shot as a result of this false denunciation. Upon examination, however, the tower was found to be locked shut and there was no trace of any activity there. The Soviets, nevertheless, encouraged townspeople to plunder the monastery.

On the eve of the Soviet invasion, armed Jews attacked the railway workers in ***Stanisławów*** in order to seize control of the train station. When the Soviets arrived in the city, Jewish houses were decorated with red flags and banners bearing slogans like "Long Live Wise Stalin." A militia made up mostly of Jews and

Ukrainians patrolled the town. Leon Rosenthal, the chief of the Red militia, was particularly active in carrying out arrests of Poles. Local Jews staged a mobile show with effigies mocking prewar Polish leaders. The spectacle attracted a large Jewish rabble which chanted anti-Polish slogans.

In nearby ***Dolina***, the NKVD, accompanied by two local Jews known to the Poles, descended on a home to arrest young Polish men who belonged to Polish patriotic organizations. One of the young Poles was killed in the local jail; the others were deported to Siberia.

Tadeusz Hajda, a teacher of Polish at the King Kazimierz Jagiellończyk High School in ***Kołomyja***, was arrested by Jewish collaborators and handed over to the NKVD shortly after the entry of the Soviets. Luck was with him because he was freed from prison because of a petition signed by Poles, Ukrainians and German colonists, though banished to a remote village school. In ***Przemyśl***, Poles employees came to the assistance of the Jewish employer. His daughter recalled:

> They [i.e., the Soviets] considered us to be "bourgeoiseie" and therefore bad. … They had taken everything we had. Everything the Germans left the Russians took. …
>
> They arrested my father and then they released him. They emptied our house. We had three Polish employees at the store. They wrote the Russians that my father was a good employer and wanted to continue to work for him. M father wrote that he would give the store to the government if he could stay on as manager. … And the Russians did not want a bourgeois running the store.

Not inrequent acts of solidarity such as this belie the much repeated and exaggerated claim of open hostility among these various groups in interwar Poland.

In ***Kałusz,*** the invading Soviet army was greeted boisterously

> by entire throngs of the Jewish community who called out [in Russian], "Our people are coming." They bore red armbands on their sleeves and bountiful bouquets of flowers which they threw on the vehicles; they embraced the tanks with their bodies. And these were Jews who we knew had property and shops … Polish children began to be discriminated against by Jewish children who yelled, "*Oy vey*, where's your Poland?" The sons of our Jewish neighbours, Itzek and Munio Haber, called to us, "Look, look. *Sigit, sigit.* A Polish officer is riding on his white horse."
>
> And thus immediately began the cleansing of the Polish population. Jews with red armbands, as representatives of the authorities, started to liquidate the Polish police, post offices, and above all took care of the military officers and soldiers. The officers were deported; those who defended themselves were shot. Polish soldiers who tried to escape to Romania over the Carpathians were killed.

In ***Gwoździec***, Jews and Ukrainians decorated the bridge to the town to greet the Red Army. They flocked to meetings organized by the Soviets to slander the Poles and flooded the Soviet authorities with denunciations of all sorts. Communist fighting squads composed of Jews and Ukrainians roamed the streets terrorizing the Polish population and entered the Catholic church to search for arms. A Jewish mob set upon and beat a Polish woman as she left church and screamed at her, "Your time is over; ours is just

beginning. Stop praying here." A few days later, at night, a group of masked Poles met up with the Jewish hoodlums in some dark alleys and gave them a good thrashing. Jewish harassment subsided somewhat after that.

When three Soviet tanks from Kołomyja descended on a company of Polish state police and border guards in ***Delatyn***, local Jews and some Ukrainians helped to disarm the Poles. In ***Sambor***, the Jews who entered the Red militia roamed the town searching for Polish officials. Many of them were arrested and executed. Those who managed to hide out for a time, like police commissioner Bryl from ***Horodenka,*** were denounced by local Jews and Ukrainian nationalists.

Jewish and Ukrainian Communists hunted down Polish policemen and civil servants in ***Bóbrka*** and handed them over to the NKVD. Szklanny, department commander of the Polish State Police, was murdered near the brickyard by the NKVD and two Jewish Communists, Kahane from Podhorodyszcze and Rod Majorek from Bóbrka.

In ***Drohobycz,*** the local militia, made up mostly of Jews, carried out inspections and drew up lists of those to be arrested and deported. Together with the NKVD they arrested Bronisław Naja, the commander of the Polish state police in the nearby village of ***Schodnica.***

Abraham Sterzer, a Jewish doctor from ***Lwów***, recalled:

> When the Red Army marched into [Eastern Galicia], the Jews behaved as if Messiah had arrived. They flocked to sign up for various communist-front organizations, joined the NKVD secret police.

On September 26th, Leon Kozłowski, a former minister in the Polish government, was taken by Soviet officers from the museum on Plac Mariacki, where he was installed temporarily, to the NKVD premises on Sapieha Street.

> The officers who arrested me engaged me in a conversation, a sort of interrogation, and stated that people like me, enemies of the people, the Soviet system destroys and puts out of action. One of them pointed out that he was a Jew and that I should remember well that it was a Jew who had arrested me and that he, a Jew, would be the cause of my eventual destruction which would inevitably occur. …
>
> My cell became overcrowded by the next day. Twelve people were placed in it on a bare wooden floor. … The vast majority of prisoners were, of course, Poles. There was an army officer, a police inspector, a uniformed lieutenant from the reserves who was a lawyer by profession from Łódź, a judge of the district court, a railway worker, a student from the Polytechnic University, and a student from the Higher School of Foreign Trade. A similar make-up of people, as I later learned, was found in the other cells: judges, policemen, captured army officers, social activists, workers, students. All of them, like I, had been arrested based on denunciations by Communists, for the most part Jews.

Toward the end of September 1939, Zygmunt Winter, a Jewish colleague from high school days, brought the NKVD to apprehend Zdzisław Zakrzewski, an activist in the All-Poland Youth organization at the Lwów Polytechnic University. Not finding him at home, the NKVD arrested Zakrzewski's father, Wilhelm, an officer of the Polish state police, who was soon executed. Zakrzewski's mother and sister were later deported to Kazakhstan, where his mother perished. Zdzisław Zakrzewski, together with a group of colleagues who made their way to the Polish army in France, had several run-ins with armed revolutionary committees composed of Jews and Ukrainians in ***Jagielnica*** and a village near ***Śniatyn*** from which they managed to extricate themselves.

Edward Trznadel, a Polish official who had taken refuge in ***Lwów,*** was apprehended by some Jewish communists from Olkusz. They took him to the commissariat and denounced him as their persecutor. Fortunately for Trznadel, after being interrogated, he was released. Ironically, Trznadel had been on good terms with the Jewish community in Olkusz, where he served as deputy starosta (county supervisor) and was even called on to mediate disputes within that community.

There are numerous similar examples from Lwów, where Poles continued to be arrested throughout the Soviet occupation. A Polish woman saw her husband, a doctor of gentry origin, killed in their home by Jews. In the fall of 1940, Stanisław Schultz, a 40-year-old Pole who had been excused from active military service for health reasons, was denounced as a Polish officer by a Jewish neighbour. He was exiled to hard labour in eastern Siberia and was not heard of again. Michał Byczyszyn was arrested on the street in 1941 by Jewish communists. Jewish students of Professor Zdzisław Żygulski advised him that he had been spared in their denunciation of their fellow Polish students, alleged "anti-Semites." Żygulski thereby escaped arrest by the NKVD.

Many accounts also identify local Jews acting as jailers and interrogators throughout Eastern Poland already during these early days of the occupation, in towns like ***Równe, Włodzimierz Wołyński, Hrubieszów, Grodno, Lwów, Augustów,*** and others. In ***Kołomyja***, a Polish prisoner recalls:

> In a cell for six people they packed thirty-six people. By a strange coincidence Władek [Władysław Traczuk] found himself in the company of policemen from his town of Gwoździec. Among them were Zalewski, Wolno, Gosztyła and Klincza. Seeing the emaciated Władek, one of them gave him a little bread and another a spoonful of soup. They were thus able to nourish him somewhat. These policemen were interrogated every night. After their ordeal they returned to their cell staggering on their feet, all mangled and bloody. Jews and Ukrainians whom we recognized often passed down the corridors. They would stop in front of the cell, point at someone with their finger, and tell the NKVD officer who accompanied them, "That's the one." After such a visit the fingered victim was treated especially badly. Zalewski and Klincza were beaten the most. … Few of them managed to leave that prison alive.

Witold Sagajłło, an officer in the Polish navy who was caught by the Soviet invasion of Eastern Poland, recalled that "nearly every commissar" he had the misfortune to meet was a Jew.

CHAPTER SIX

Anti-Polish and Anti-Christian Agitation, Vandalism and Looting

Despite the propaganda claims of equal treatment of all nationalities, the Soviet Union was known to persecute various groups on ethnic grounds. The first nationality to be targeted in the 1930s was the Polish minority in Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Belorussia who were arrested en masse and deported to the Soviet interior. Ten of thousands of them perished during that ordeal. With the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact the Soviet press adopted a pro-Nazi point of view and embarked on an anti-Polish propaganda campaign which soon turned into an all-out policy of combating not only Polish institutions, schools, and organizations, but indeed all manifestations of Polishness.

Hitler's speeches berating Poland and the Poles were quoted extensively. Virtually every issue of each major Soviet Russian newspaper ran at least one hostile article, with a height of thirty-nine such articles and poems in *Pravda* on September 19, 1939, two days after the Soviet invasion of Poland. But not only did the Soviet press appeal to, and thus perpetuate, centuries-old nationalistic hatreds, it gave a clear signal to the local Russian-speaking authorities to condone or encourage violence against Poles. This official sanctioning of violence, combined with the prewar grievances of the minorities, made Poles into scapegoats.

The Soviet press encouraged hatred of "Poland of the *Pans,*" "Polish gentry," or simply "Poles," while ignoring the fact that the government of the second republic had abolished all titles of nobility. As historian Ewa M. Thompson explains,

> The connotations of the word *pan* in Russian indicate that the press was referring not only to social class but also, and primarily, to nationality and to Polish social manners traditionally perceived by Russians as pretentious and excessively rooted. In regard to this assortment of Polish targets, an abusive vocabulary was used in articles, poems, and stories written by Russians of otherwise spotless reputations. Things Polish were vilified … Poland was presented as a place where a small group of Polish nobles brutalized millions of Belorussians, Ukrainians, and Jews. *Gentlemen's [Pans'] Poland* became a term of abuse and a synonym for all that was wrong with the conquered territories. ... Witnesses of the horrors of Polish rule wrote their testimonials for newspapers, and Hitler's allegations about Poland were approvingly quoted.

Broad cross-sections of Jewish society joined in this anti-Polish campaign:

> On 30 September [1939] *Finansovaia gazeta* reported that during such festivities [of "liberation" from the oppression of the Polish overlords] in the city of Białystok, "a 20-year-old house painter Goldkor … proposed that a telegram with thanks be sent to Comrade Stalin." On 20 September *Pravda* described "a meeting of the intelligentsia" in the town of Słonim … In this town of under

> 20,000, 750 members of the local intelligentsia were said to have attended this meeting, among them "Drs. Weiss and Kovarskii" who gave anti-Polish speeches. On 13 October in *Pravda*, G. Rylkin ridiculed Tomasz Kapitułko, former head of a labor union in Białystok, only because Kapitułko was Polish. On 20 October in *Pravda* A. Erlikh spoke of "western Belorussia that had been tortured by Poles." On 29 September 1939 *Pravda* published a testimonial by a Mr. Prager about his stay in a "Polish concentration camp." On 10 March 1940 *Pravda* published an article entitled 'Letters from western parts of Ukraine and Belorussia,' which stated that an American Jewish daily published in New York in Yiddish had issued a special supplement containing letters from persons in Soviet-occupied Poland. An inhabitant of Grodno is said to have written the following to his brother in the United States: 'Dear brother: Now we are free. We have jobs and try to forget the terrible life in Poland in the past.' … The prominence given by the Soviet papers to Jewish names in the descriptions could hardly be accidental [though they were likely representative—*M.P.*] …

Numerous accounts found throughout this compilation attest to the frequency with which derogatory statements were made in public, especially at meetings and rallies, about Poland and the Poles. Anti-Polish agitation was also prevalent in private settings where spontaneous outbursts were the order of the day in the early period. As one Jewish witness reported, "As for the Jews, they took revenge on Poles sometimes in a very nasty way; the expression 'Your time is over' was not only much used, but, by and large, overused." Even religious Jews could use the prevailing political climate to disparage Poles with impunity about such things as their non-kosher diet and their Catholic beliefs.

The first interwar politician to come out publicly in support of the German-Soviet partition of Poland was Jakub Wygodski, a Zionist leader and former deputy to Poland's Seym (Parliament), who was to head the city's Jewish council. Wygodski stated that "the majority of the Jewish community expresses its satisfaction at the fact that the Lithuanians have entered Wilno," an opinion seconded in the Lithuanian press by Benjamin Bursztejn, another local Zionist activist. Examples of other forms of anti-Polish and anti-Catholic activities carried out by Jews abound.

As in the village of ***Wielkie Oczy*** near Lubaczów, noted earlier, Jewish youths who joined the komsomol roamed the vicinity of ***Skidel*** near Grodno destroying Catholic roadside shrines. Near ***Łysków,*** south of Wołkowysk, a roadside cross was knocked over and the figure of the crucified Jesus was removed. In ***Naliboki*** near Stołpce, in Nowogródek province, Jews demolished a statue of St. John adorning a pond and threwing it into the water.

A Jew who prepared the market square for the erection of a statue of Stalin in ***Wołożyn*** detonated a large cross that stood in the way. Jewish Communists by the name of Schmarka Itzkovic and Yishaiau Rubin removed religious banners from the Catholic church in ***Wiszniew***, affixed red flags to the poles, and paraded with them across town to the market square. There they stood at the head of the committee that welcomed the Red Army and its officers with bread and salt.

In ***Wiśniowiec***, in Volhynia, a group of young Jews hurled rocks at the Carmelite monastery, smashing the historic stained-glass windows of the church. The local Communist militia, comprised of Jews and

Ukrainians, desecrated portraits in the Catholic bishop's residence in ***Łuck*** by poking out the eyes with bayonets.

Jews attempted unsuccessfully to seize the Catholic chapel in the colony of ***Szemiotówka*** near Kobryń. Shortly after the Soviet entry a civilian mob of about 100 people armed with pistols and bearing red armbands, almost all of them Jews, stormed into the seminary in ***Pińsk*** and stole all the possessions in that complex of buildings. The priests and clerics were rounded up and forced into the courtyard and threatened with execution as enemies of the Communist regime. A Soviet patrol, drawn there by the commotion, liberated the priests from their frenzied captors. (The Soviets weren't, of course, opposed to oppressing the clergy—that had after all killed off tens of thousands of Christian clergymen since the Revolution—but it way they who were to decide when the time was right to strike, and not their overzealous lackeys.) Elsewhere in that town Polish women locked themselves in a church to prevent Jewish policemen from desecrating it.

A group of Jews, composed of both men and women, invaded the Catholic church and rectory in ***Łomazy*** near Biała Podlaska. They destroyed liturgical robes, religious artifacts and church records. In ***Jedwabne,*** a local harnessmaker and Communist sympathizer by the name of Yakov Katz defecated in front of the church door (though not in front of the synagogue), and mocked the "stupid Polacks" for building a church that became an outhouse.

In ***Uściług,*** on the River Bug, in Volhynia, local Jews organized a pro-atheist spectacle in which a horse was dressed in Christian liturgical vestments and paraded around town. The wife of the head of the revolutionary committee, a Mrs. Kohn, also an ardent Communist herself, evicted the nuns from the hospital in ***Śniatyn*** and discarded religious artificacts from the hospital chapel.

It should be noted that Soviet soldiers did not take part in these sacrilegious deeds, many of which are recorded in Jewish accounts. They appear to have been an entirely local initiative directed at the Catholic Church and mirrored the actions carried out by the Nazis in German-occupied Poland. There too the Germans destroyed countless Catholic churches, shrines and monuments and German soldiers, dressed in clerical robes and carrying banners and other religious artifacts, conducted mock processions. There is no record of similar assaults on synagogues in the Soviet zone.

Bishop Franciszek Barda of ***Przemyśl*** reported in November 1939 that his chancery had been taken over as a dwelling place for Jews and that some Jewish women had attempted to occupy the episcopal residence where the auxiliary bishop and several priests resided. In ***Żółkiew,*** militiamen, most of them Jews, expropriated a monastery in order to house Jewish refugees from the German zone.

A committee consisting of Jewish Communists was put in charge of the schools of the Benedictine and Ursuline Orders in ***Lwów;*** they implemented the new atheistic curriculum bereft of references to Polish history. A Jew by the name of Schnellig was appointed the "director" of the Catholic seminary in Lwów. Schnellig oversaw the confiscation of the furnishings of Bishop Eugeniusz Baziak, who had to leave the building, and summoned the militia to invigilate all activities at the seminary. Schnellig took every opportunity to mock Poland and the Poles. He even ordered the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary

(Marian Sisters), who ran a nearby nursery school, to issue sacramental wine to the children for lunch. Another Jew, who had completed his rabbinical studies, frequently stood watch outside the seminary church and attempted to engage the clerics in conversation about religion. This Jew was very malicious and aggressive and ridiculed the Catholic faith.

Student delegations were convoked to a theatre in Lwów on October 15, 1939 and informed that religious instruction and prayers were being banned at schools and crucifixes would be removed. Jewish delegates raised cheers in honour of Stalin and the Communist Party and started to sing the Internationale. When Polish students intoned the hymns "We Want God" ("*My chcemy Boga*") and "We Will Not Forsake This Land" ("*Nie rzucim ziemi*") in protest, a scuffle broke out. As a result, many of the Polish students were arrested.

Before the sham referendum held in the Fall of 1939 to secure the populace's approval to the incorporation of the southeastern Borderlands into the Ukrainian SSR, trucks decorated with red flags, banners and propaganda placards, full of mostly Jewish youths boisterously singing songs praising the Soviet Union and maligning Poland and Poles, circulated throughout Lwów.

Jewish teachers took charge of the orphanage of the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Immaculate Conception in ***Biłka Szlachecka*** near Lwów, and ardently preached atheism to the children. Young Jews distributed anti-religious leaflets during Catholic religious services.

The Christmas season presented an opportunity for a Jewish teacher in ***Deraźne*** near Kostopol to tear religious medallions off the necks of Christian children and to forbid them from wearing them.

On February 22, 1940, a group of school children in ***Borysław*** started singing the Polish religious hymn "*Boże, coś Polskę*" ("God, who protected Poland"), instead of the Internationale. This led to the arrest of Monsignor Andrzej Osikowicz, who was eventually released after interventions by the Polish population. A few days later, local Jewish communists burst into the Catholic church destroying and making off with paintings and religious artifacts. In the ensuing mêlée with the enraged Christian population, six Jews were injured.

Most of these ardent teachers were local Jews whose educational and pedagogical qualifications were often very poor. However, the principals of many schools were Jews who had been brought in from the Soviet Union. As Dov Levin concedes, they were committed ideologues without exception.

The destruction of libraries and burning of Polish books was a common spectacle under both the Nazi and Soviet rules in Poland. In ***Białzórka*** near Krzemieniec, where the Bolsheviks were greeted enthusiastically by Ukrainians and Jews, one of the first deeds in which the rabble joined was the destruction of the local library and the burning of Polish books.

A similar fate met the Pedagogical Library attached to the Emilia Plater High School in ***Grodno***. A commission composed of two Jews arrived at the library in December 1939 to examine the holdings. If a book contained the word "God," that was enough to justify its destruction regardless of the subject matter which the inspectors did not know or care to know. Almost the entire collection was confiscated and later burned.

The archives assembled in the Dominican monastery in ***Lwów*** were also ravaged. Books and documents, some of them very old and priceless, were destroyed deliberately and through neglect. The chief custodian was a Jew from Łódź, an NKVD informer, who kept taking over more of the building and did his utmost to try to evict the monks. Fortunately, on occasion, some people at the Municipal Office came to their aid. This Jew also played a key role in luring Father Czesław Kaniak, the second prior, to a meeting in the nearby arsenal ostensibly to sign a lease. Father Kaniak was arrested and taken to the NKVD prison on Pełczyńska Street. He was never heard of again. (There is some indication he was sentenced in Kirovograd in November 1940.) On Easter Sunday in 1940, a youth brigade attached to the security services invaded the church and disrupted the mass. Upon leaving the church worshippers were confronted with the blaring music of the Internationale.

Soon after the Soviet arrival a large rally was organized in the old market square in ***Łomża*** at which a Jew stood on a motor vehicle screaming that the Poles will now be put in their place. When word leaked out that the NKVD would be staging a public book burning Polish students conspired to smuggle out books from their high school library. The plan was foiled by the school's new principal, Sura Malinowicz, a local Jewish woman, who promptly reported the students to the authorities. The female students were arrested and the library holdings were destroyed.

As under Nazi rule numerous Polish monuments were destroyed or desecrated throughout Eastern Poland. Polish coat of arms and emblems, as well as pictures of Polish leaders, were removed immediately from government offices, schools and public places.

With the help of the local Jewish population, a monument honouring the Poles who rose against the Russian occupiers in 1863–1864 was destroyed in ***Zambrów*** on orders of a Jewish commissar. (Local Jews, including town councillors, had vehemently opposed its erection before the war.) A statue of St. John was pelted with stones and damaged during the May Day celebration in that town in 1940.

In order to mark the entry of the Soviet Army, Jewish teenagers in ***Baranowicze*** converged on the Tomb of the Unkown Soldier located in the centre of the town and smashed the eagle, the Polish national emblem, that adorned that monument with their axes.

In ***Dzisna,*** in the evening of September 17th, a group of Jews together with a few Belorussians set out with torches to demolish a bust of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, widely revered as having saved Poland from the Bolshevik onslaught in 1921, located in the centre of Józef Poniatowski Avenue. Singing the Internationale, they hacked the monument to pieces with crowbars and axes.

A memorial tablet commemorating the Polish students who fell in defence of ***Lwów*** in 1918–1919 was blotted out by Jews in that city. Polish high school students who were taken to cinemas to watch Soviet film chronicles in October 1939, and mocked the alleged accomplishments of Soviet learning and technology, were fingered by Jews and escorted out by the NKVD. They were soon dispatched to the Gulag.

That these actions were not motivated solely by Communist zeal, but had a distinct anti-Polish and anti-Catholic edge, is underscored by the fact that there is no record of Jewish monuments and synagogues

being vandalized or profaned. It is noteworthy that the anti-religious policies and anti-Church activities of the Soviet regime were overseen (until his death in 1943) by Yemelian Yaroslavsky (actually Miney Israilevich Gubelman), a Jew who had started up the powerful Association of Atheists. Yaroslavsky attracted many fanatical followers among Jews, who vigorously persecuted and virtually destroyed the Catholic Church, which was mostly Polish, in the Soviet Union before the outbreak of World War II.

The first Christmas under Soviet rule was marred by Adam Ważyk (Wagman), a Jewish literary figure in prewar Poland, who railed against the Catholic clergy in the communist daily *Czerwony Sztandar,* for spreading religious propaganda "around the Christmas tree."

As we shall see, in their role as members of the militia and in other official capacities, Jews engaged in widespread pilfering of property belonging to Poles. The initial stages of the Soviet occupation also presented an opportunity for Jewish gangs, and others, to loot Polish estates. An estate in ***Podweryszki*** near Bieniakonie (southeast of Wilno) owned by the Kiersnowski family was totally stripped of its belongings. One of the gangs who plundered the mansion was led by a local Jew.

Poles also felt Jewish wrath in their day-to-day lives. Jewish shops in ***Dzisna*** remained closed and goods were not allowed to be purchased until the new Soviet authorities arrived. The Jews thereby left their Christian neighbours, their long-time clients, to fend for themselves. The local Polish school was soon turned into a Russian one, even though there were extremely few Russians in the area. A Polish student recalls being reproached by her teacher, a Jewish friend of her mother's and a graduate of the Stefan Batory University in Wilno, in Russian: "Stop speaking in that dog's language. Your Poland will never return."

Chaim Chomsky (Chomski), the head of the municipal administration (*gorsovet*) in ***Słonim*** and an ardent opponent of Polish statehood, forbade the use of the Polish language in public. In ***Szumsk*** near Krzemieniec,

> The Jews … showed particular hostility towards Poles. They donned red armbands and proclaimed themselves to be a militia. They harassed Poles for every possible reason. They forbade us to speak Polish in front of the church.

Symbolic funerals were held throughout Eastern Poland to mark the destruction of the Polish state. An eyewitness reported on such an event staged in ***Borysław,*** in which, to their credit, not all Jews rejoiced:

> Someone thought up the idea of holding a funeral for Poland. They made a coffin and wrote "Poland" on two sides of it. The funeral procession made its way through the entire city. Students from all the schools in Borysław were sent to this macabre event. "Poland" was buried in the sports stadium …
>
> The next day at school we had to report. Not everyone had participated in the funeral. They knew very well who did not attend the burial arranged for our homeland.
>
> I stood on the small rug in the administrative office: "Krupikówna, you weren't at the funeral." "I couldn't go because the elastic in my underwear broke …" I replied to the school authority. My [Jewish] girlfriend [Fredzia] Wajdman said, "I don't like going to funerals. I prefer weddings."

> Somehow we got off easy. The person who questioned us about our absence at the funeral, although a Jewish woman, was sympathetic. May God send us more good Jews like that.

A coffin with "Poland" inscribed on it was also paraded around in ***Lwów,*** and doubtless in many other localities.

The new authorities also used every opportunity to foster hatred for Poland. In the largely Jewish town of ***Zofiówka*** (or ***Zofjówka***) near Łuck, anti-Polish posters were plastered on many homes. At the start of the new school year (delayed until October 1939), the NKVD further poisoned the atmosphere by inciting students to recall incidents of harassment of ethnic minorities in independent Poland. This call was taken up by a portion of the Jewish youth, even though relations among students of various ethnic and religious backgrounds in prewar Polish schools had been proper. Their conduct and taunts caused many Polish students to drop out of school. In a ***Pińsk*** school, Jewish students called their Polish colleagues "Polish dogs."

Public meetings, rallies and assemblies inevitably became forums for anti-Polish agitation. Independent Poland was accused of outrageous acts of oppression directed at just about everyone: minorities, workers, peasants, military servicemen, children of school age, etc. Jews were particularly prominent at political rallies where they relished taking crude swipes at Poland and Poles: "*Nu,* Poland's finally gone to the devil." "Poland is in a sack held by Hitler at one end and by Stalin at the other." It was an atmosphere in which denunciations abounded.

At a public meeting held in ***Wołożyn*** the participants were invited to tell about their life under the Polish regime. A Jew ascended the stage and, turning his face to the wall, showed a hole in his torn pants, and then he said, "Our whole life under the Polacks was like my pants."

At a meeting organized by the Soviet authorities in ***Ustrzyki Dolne,*** Szmyrko Bergenbaum, an affluent Jew from Sanok who owned a store, restaurant and skittle-alley and whose children had completed their higher education under Polish rule, screamed out "To hell with Poland" as he held a Polish flag in his hand. He then took the flag, smashed it and trampled it.

During the 1940 May Day rally in ***Wizna,*** Lejb Guzowski, who held the position of political agitator at the school and secretary of the local Communist organization, stood on the base of the destroyed Polish military monument and railed at the Polish population who had been instructed to assemble for the event: "You have to remember once and for all that Poland will never return. The great Soviet Union and we are the masters of this land." The Jews in the crowd yelled out: "Long live the Red Army! Long live our great leader and father Stalin!" The Poles were dejected and enraged at the conduct of the occupiers and their collaborators. That June Guzowski was executed by the Polish underground.

At times, Jews competed with one another in fabricating charges against the Polish state. One young Jew in ***Lwów*** railed on how every Polish count, officer and landowner had the right to cast from six to ten votes in Polish elections, whereas a peasant or worker did not have even one vote. A Jewish professor noted, with shame, that Jewish speakers dominated a special meeting called at the University of Lwów to greet the new

Soviet rulers: "There was no nonsense or lie that this portion of the Jewish youth who believed that their dreams had beeen fulfilled would not let itself be taken in by."

Poles were also compelled to attend these spectacles and anyone who dared to question the malicious and humiliating attacks was soon arrested and given a harsh prison term. Needless to say, prewar Communists and the radicalized Jewish youth did not need much encouragement to jump on the bandwagon. But this circus also attracted masses of non-Communist Jews who were consumed by the Soviet propaganda. As one teenage resident of ***Grodno*** from a prominent, well-to-do family recalls,

> My father was enthusiastic about the possibilities now that eastern Poland was about to be annexed to the Soviet Union, and he took me with him to speeches and political rallies. At the first one we attended, a Soviet political officer had harangued a huge crowd. I struggled to understand the words. "There is no need to fear Hitler," he said. "Hitler is dead. We have killed him." Even I knew that was a lie. But my father didn't seem to care that the speeches were all propaganda. He believed that the war was now over and that our part of Poland was on the verge of becoming a much better place. All the wonderful things we had heard about for years on Radio Moscow were about to come true. …
>
> Many Jews were Socialists or Communists, and all of a sudden they began taking important positions. … No one, for example, was allowed to say "Zhid" anymore, the common term for Jew [actually, the only Polish word for Jew—*M.P.*] that carried with it an offensive connotation … All of a sudden one was not permitted to pronounce this standard vocabulary item upon pain of a visit from the NKVD. How, then, to indicate a Jewish person? It was a problem you could hear some Poles struggling with. 'He's a Zdi … a Zhi … a … you know, he's one of those who pray in the synagogue.

The People's Assemblies of Western Belorussia and Western Ukraine, convoked at the end of October 1939, provided a forum for local delegates to show their new loyalties. One Jewish speaker who had completed teachers' college in Poland, speaking in Yiddish, claimed that in Poland, "schools were a rare exception and consisted of one or two classes." He called on the delegates to incorporate the region into Soviet Belorussia.

Another speaker, a Jewish deputy from Borysław, maintained that under Polish rule more than 20,000 people in his city of 45,000 were starving. He exalted the Soviet invaders for their concern for the workers and urged that the region be incorporated into Soviet Ukraine.

Loyalties changed overnight. A Jewish lawyer from central Poland by the name of Henoch Korngold had always distanced himself from his Jewish colleagues in Wilno, the "Litvaks" who spoke Russian among themselves, underscoring that he was a Pole of the Jewish religion. After Poland's defeat, however, he expressed to a former Polish judge his delight that the "Polish rule had finally come to an end."

One Jew recalled, shortly after, typical scenes he had witnessed:

> As for the Jews they took their revenge on Poles in a manner that was oftentimes very hideous. The expression "your days are over" was not only used very frequently, but usually it was abused. Once in a crowded train I was a witness to how a Jew who was standing turned to a Pole who was seated and took him to task for not offering him his seat. When the Pole replied that he did not see why he should give up his seat, an avalanche of invectives and insults came at him among them, like a refrain, the Jew repeated, "Do you think that these are the good old days?"

A Jew from ***Mir*** expressed the sentiments of many of his compatriots when he commented about the transformed relations between Poles and Jews: "I have to admit that we were quite happy to see them [the Poles] in their present condition. … Our rulers of yesterday were made small and humble." There was precious little brotherhood to be had.

This state of affairs was not to the liking of all Jews, however. A faculty colleague of Wanda Pomykalska's father, who had taken refuge in ***Stanisławów,*** confided:

> The Jewish youngsters of this city … were being registered to serve in a Red militia, and were very enthusiastic. …
>
> Lanski particularly noted that the many parochial schools had lost their nuns, priests and crucifixes, and in their place now were Marxist teachers, many of whom, he said, were of Jewish faith. Instead of the moralities and faith of religion, he said, the teachings were now strictly Marxist dogma.
>
> While Lanski himself was Jewish, he did not agree with what was being done. "The clever Communists are getting their messages across and leaving the Jews to take the blame," he said.

Of course, the Communists should not shoulder all the blame. Without a multitude of willing players scenes as those described above could not have occurred.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Few Short Weeks Was All That Was Needed to Leave a Mark

The original border, agreed to in the secret protocol to the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 23, 1939, divided Poland along the Narew–Vistula–San rivers. However, in the Nazi-Soviet Frontier and Friendship Treaty of September 28, 1939, the USSR exchanged the territory between the Vistula and Bug rivers (Lublin Province and part of Warsaw Province) for control over Lithuania, which was added to the Soviet sphere of influence. The predominantly Polish city of Wilno was given over to Lithuania, but that country was eventually incorporated into the Soviet Union the following year.

Thus in mid-September large portions of the Lublin region was occupied by the Red Army and remained under Soviet rule until that territory was handed over to the Germans in the early part of October 1939. In those few weeks of Soviet rule local collaborators, eager to establish the "new order," left an indelible mark that was to take its toll on relations between Poles and Jews throughout the war.

According to historian Dov Levin,

> A Jewish Communist who had been released from prison by the outbreak of the war and reached the town of Chelm [***Chełm***], which was under Soviet rule at the time (it was subsequently handed over to the Germans), describes the entire town as having been in Jewish hands; the mayor was Jewish, and all the policemen and municipal office holders were Jewish Communists with the exception of "a few Poles."

According to one Polish eyewitness, when a Polish army unit led by Lieutenant Janusz Pawełkiewicz entered ***Chełm*** just before the arrival of the Soviet army, the soldiers encountered the grisly sight of twelve Polish officers nailed to the floor of a school, apparently the deed of local Jews. Soon gates adorned with flowers were put up by Jews in honour of the invading Soviet army. Masses of excited Jews, young and old, converged on the streets of Chełm wearing red armbands. Armed militia groups roamed the town looking for victims.

> It was late in the afternoon, about six o'clock. On the street we were crossing we witnessed a gang of about ten to fifteen Jewish youths assaulting a young soldier with their knives, truncheons and bayonets. Each of the Jews wanted to have his share in the murder. The entire group attacked him as he was walking alone. This took place just some fifty to a hundred metres in front of us. We were walking in the same direction as that soldier. Seeing what was happening and hearing the voices of the soldier and the Jews who were killing him I felt weak and fainted. My father dragged me to the entrance of a building … That picture remains with me to this day.

With the Soviet retreat from this area,

> An organized group of artisans reached Luck [Łuck, in Volhynia] from Chelm, which had fallen to the Germans, leaving their wives and children behind. The members of this group, carrying a faded red flag that they had saved from the 1905 revolution as a talisman, … formed a commune, found jobs, and pooled their income.

In the largely Jewish town of ***Kosów Lacki*** north of Sokołów Podlaski, according to Jewish sources,

> The Russians were quick to organize a local government, and a few young men who had been members of the illegal Communist Party in Kosow proudly helped them. Volunteering for the militia and guiding the Soviet troops around the region. … But after a few days the Russians left. … Many young people chose to leave with the Russians.

In ***Biała Podlaska,*** according to Yosel Epelbaum,

> True, some of the Jewish communists, operating openly for the first time, rubbed the Poles' noses in their defeat. One young Jewish woman, proudly holding a red flag in her hand, stood in front of city hall and blocked the Polish mayor from entering. Other Jews informed the Soviet military commanders of Polish officials who had been the harshest anticommunists before the war. These unfortunates were now slated for deportation to the Stalinist gulag.
>
> There were bizarre moments, too. In a communist parade down the main street, a woman with one leg much shorter than the other limped along shouting in Yiddish, *"Alle gleich, alle gleich."* (All are equal, all are equal.)

In ***Łomazy*** near Biała Podlaska, the local workers' or revolutionary committee was composed of local Jews, who constituted about a third of the town's population: Epelbaum, who was appointed chairman, Litman, who also headed the workers' militia, Moszko Połosecki, and Mejer Kuk. (As mentioned earlier, group of Jews invaded the Catholic church and rectory, destroying destroyed liturgical robes, religious artifacts and church records.)

The entire administration of ***Międzyrzec Podlaski*** was, according to a Jewish source, also taken over by local Jews:

> The communist Jews were glad to meet their comrades. They all took over control of the municipal offices and enjoyed the power tremendously. The festivities didn't last long, since Germany and the Soviet Union signed a treaty that determined the border between the U.S.S.R. and the Third Reich would be the Bug River. And so again, the Russians left and the Germans came back. About 2,000 Jews who belonged to the Communist Party joined the Red Army, and fled to the East.

A young Zionist, a committed member of the Hashomer Hatzair, describes the adjustment of the Jewish community of ***Radzyń Podlaski*** to the new order.

> In our town, unrest, tension and excitement prevailed. There were heated discussions, particularly among our Jewish boys, since our future was a stake. … we expected communism to be the complete liberation of all working and peace-loving people. All the idealistic slogans and phrases which were spoken and written about communism would now become reality. Our Zionist dreams had proved to be illusory and seemed to have been outdated by historical events. …
>
> Soon news arrived that outposts of the Red Army had been seen in towns and villages nearby. The jubilation was great, especially among us Jews. The roads in and out of the town were, however, still full of the rest of the Polish Army: cavalry, infantry and artillery. There was constant movement in the streets. In the nearby woods and villages the rest of the polish Army was regrouped and drawn together finally. On the edge of the town some Russian trucks with soldiers of the Red Army appeared.
>
> The local communists, with their red armbands welcomed their Russian comrades. They received rifles from them and proceeded to take over control of the town. All the dreams of the Red Revolution, it seemed, would come true within minutes. The great liberation had begun. The remaining officers were stripped of their power and public offices taken over. Enemies of communism and anti-Semites [i.e., the Polish officials] were quickly prosecuted and relieved of their duties. The majority of them, however, had already gone into hiding out of fear.
>
> The joy of many older Jews of the upper class and that of the Zionists was restrained. The majority, however, were glad to have witnessed that day—the day on which the promise of the Red Revolution would be fulfilled. …
>
> The wearers of red armbands, most of them young and Jewish, were conspicuous in the town as they raced back and forth on confiscated bicycles or in coaches drawn by fine horses.
>
> I observed all this with respect and perhaps with some jealousy, too. I felt like someone who had been on the wrong horse. After some consideration, I found an excuse in my lack of experience at age seventeen. I also was consoled by the recognition that I was pink, although it was clear that only true red was acceptable at that moment. To play an important part, I would have to have been older and redder, I regretted that.
>
> Among the new rulers with red armbands, I recognized Abraham Pinkus who was their leader. I knew him very well, since he worked at the town's power plant where I had recently found a job. …
>
> The day was hardly over when the Russians on the edge of the town moved their trucks eastward and the world of Abraham Pinkus and his comrades fell apart completely. Instantly, the Polish cavalry appeared … who took over the city … With the Russians, the new communist leaders also left, using any available means of transportation for their trek eastward.

In ***Łęczna*** near Lublin, upon the Soviet entry a group of Jews armed themselves and took control of the town and paraded around in red armbands even though it was not still apparent where the Soviet-German demarcation line would run. They issued various demands to the local Polish officials and threatened to

hang them from a lamppost if they did not erect a bridge across the River Wieprz by the following morning.

In ***Józefów Biłgorajski***, a small town of 3,000 inhabitants, a local Jew known as Major organized a four-member armed patrol of the Red militia, all of them Jews, who toured the countryside on carriages confiscating from the villagers supplies that had been abandoned by the Polish army. When one of the residents of the village of Majdan Nepryski turned to the local commander of the NKVD for confirmation of this order, he denied issuing it and ordered the return of the seized goods. Previously, Major had organized rallies in the town denouncing the Poles as oppressors of the Jews.

Jews with red armbands accompanied Soviet militarymen on their inspections of hospitals and private homes in ***Tomaszów*** searching for, and apprehending, Polish officers among the wounded and hidden Polish soldiers. When the Soviets ceded the town to the Germans masses of Jews flocked to accompany them on their retreat to the River Bug. Finding themselves sandwiched between the Soviet and German forces near Bełżec, shots were fired at the Jews from both sides and many of them were killed.

In ***Krasnobród*** near Zamość, zealous young Jews with red armbands, in their rush to organize the new order, descended on the local monastery to announce to the prelate, rather rudely, that the building would have to be evacuated. No reason for the eviction was given. It is likely that this "local" initiave had not been sanctioned by the Soviets.

According to Jewish reports from ***Zamość,*** the Jewish community is ecstatic over the arrival of the Soviets and enlists in large numbers to help build the "new order":

> Between Yom Kippur and Sukkot of the year … the Germans left the town. We learned about the Russians entering. The Jews were afraid of pogroms and assaults by Poles during the entry of the Russians. They kept their shops closed, the doors barred. All the men gathered in the gateways armed with crowbars, axes, and other bits of iron to defend themselves against assault by Poles, but there was no assault.
>
> After three days Russian tanks with many soldiers on them entered the town. Jews rejoiced and came to the market square. The army went on, and a 'city council' was established consisting of formerly arrested communists of whom the majority were Jews. The local Jewish communist Holcman was placed at the head of it. … Each night there were meetings at the market place. Holcman and others delivered communist speeches in Polish, Russian, and Yiddish.
>
> … after 13 days of German presence in Zamość—they leave the city.
>
> Zamość is left without authority in charge. A citizen's militia is put together … The Poles are hoping that the Polish Army will march into the city at an opportune moment and take over the city. But when the first of the Red Army tanks make their appearance in the Neustadt [New Town], a citizen's militia is created lead [sic] by the professor from the Yiddish Gymnasium, Schnelling.
>
> I am witness to the negotiation undertaken by Schnelling at the Rathaus [town hall] with Hanary [a member of the Polish militia], regarding the transfer of weapons, and the dissolution of the

[Polish] militia. They offer no resistance. Our Jewish brethren have ammunition, and together with [a few] left-leaning Poles, they take over the city.

… the Zamość Jews receive the Red Army with great joy. The Magistrate is decorated with red flags. The Jewish youth of Zamość is especially active in greeting and receiving the marching divisions of the Soviet Army. One now sees Jews with beards in the streets of Zamość talking to members of the Red Army. Here, you can see how the Zamość porter, David Kaplan dances a *kazatsky* in the middle of the street with a group of Red Army soldiers.

A 'Revcom' [revolutionary committee] is created, lead [sic] by three Zamość Jews: Hackman, Goldvarg, and Schnelling. Hundreds of Zamość young people take part in the militia.

Also, a tragic mishap occurred, which deserves to be recalled. Yekel Eltzter is killed by a bullet that is accidentally discharged from a revolver being handled by a friend. Thousands of people from Zamość escort this well-known anti-fascist fighter to his final rest. His coffin, decorated with flowers, and guarded, is set out in the Yiddish I.L. Peretz Library, where each person can pay his last respects. Hundreds of floral wreaths are carried during the funeral, and for the first time in the history of Zamość Jewry, he is bidden farewell by a representative of the Red Army.

As if they had grown out from under the ground, a procession of two hundred tanks appeared with a red flag. At the head of the procession was the well-known communist in Zamosc [Zamość], Josef Ionczak. When the tanks arrived, a tank driver came out and addressed the procession. After the shouting of Hurrahs, in honor of the Red Army, and for Stalin, he asked the audience to disperse. The tanks arranged themselves on the marketplace.

Meanwhile, the young people, and others, utilized the situation and grabbed the weaponry that the Polish soldiers had turned in. With the consent of the Soviet military command, this armed group took over the authority in the city. The result of this was to guard against the occurrence on any provocation.

People dispersed, heroic doers, Hope ran through the streets. Wherever a Polish soldier was encountered, he was searched, to see whether or not he was armed. If any sort of weapon was found on his person, it was confiscated. In the evening, a detachment of Soviet soldiers arrived, who patrolled the city.

The next day, an official citizens militia was created to safeguard the peace and security of the city. It was possible for everyone to sign up for the militia. In the first few days, indeed, it already numbered in the hundreds.

Immediately, on the second night, a tragic incident took place. It was in the middle of the night, at the location of the militia (in the former municipal building of the *Neustadt* [New Town]). A number of comrades were sitting—Yekel Eltzter, Aharon Schor, and others. They were playing with revolvers. At a certain moment, the revolver held by Aharon Schor discharged, and the bullet hit Eltzter in the heart. He died a couple of hours later. This tragic incident made an impression in the entire city. Yekel Eltzter was one of the most talented and intelligent of the group. He was 26 years old. He had a military funeral. A Soviet colonel gave the eulogy.

> In Zamosc, so many Jews joined the local militia that they accounted for a majority in its ranks. When the Soviets quit the town (after the border between the Soviet and German areas was drawn), scores of Jewish militiamen joined Red Army formations that were retreating to the east.
>
> I remember the hours of exaltation, especially among those Jews who had some connection with the Communist Party. With much enthusiasm they joined the "People's Militia". Among them were also some individuals who helped the Russians to disarm the Polish officers and soldiers who had found refuge in the surrounding woods.

Acting on instructions from the Soviet military commander, the militia went around arresting army officers, soldiers, policemen, municipal employees, social activists, members of the National Democratic Party, and clergymen. Hundreds of prisoners were kept under the open sky near the prison on Okrzeja Street. They were mistreated, particularly by Jewish militiamen, and robbed of their belongings—boots, watches, bicycles, wagons, etc. Wounded prisoners were forced to undress to their underwear. Some of those arrested were executed, such as a group of policemen near the Rotunda. In the New Town, young, armed Jews with red armbands marched columns of Polish soldiers to the town square where a hysterical Jewish mob whistled and jeered at them.

A Jewish woman by the name of Huberman, who was put in charge of the hospital pharmacy in Zamość, refused to issue medicine to wounded Polish soldiers. The daughter of a prosperous Jewish restaurateur, on spotting a Polish officer in plainclothes, screamed at the top of her lungs to Soviet soldiers nearby: "Catch him! Catch him!" A Catholic priest managed to avoid being apprehended by Jewish militiamen because of the intervention of local Poles.

After plundering the region, the Soviets retreated several weeks after their arrival. They were accompanied by a sizeable retinue of Jews (up to several thousand from Zamość alone), including well-to-do ones, who loaded vast quantities of goods onto trains headed east. On reaching the River Bug, the Soviets detached the carriages carrying the passengers and unceremoniously dumped the Jews on the German side of the redrawn border. The wagons carrying the confiscated Jewish belongings proceeded into the Soviet zone. The stranded Jews trickled home on foot.

Two Polish soldiers, still in uniform but unarmed, were set upon by a group of armed Jews in the village of ***Wierzba,*** to the north of Zamość, and murdered. Nearby, in ***Grabowiec***, before the arrival of the Germans in October 1939, twelve Polish officers dressed in civilian clothes who had been sheltered by the local Polish population were brutally murdered in the bakery of a rich Jew called Pergamen. Another Jew, known as "Kuka," took the bodies to the cemetery and dumped them in a ditch.

Polish soldiers exhausted from battle with the Germans were rounded up by the Jewish revolutionary committee in ***Krasnystaw*** (one of the Jews with a red armband rode on a mare brandishing a sword) and were guarded in the market square by the Jewish militia. A Polish army unit happened to arrive in town and after firing a shot the Jewish fifth columnists fled in panic.

In ***Izbica*** near Krasnystaw, one of the Jewish residents of that predominantly Jewish town recalled:

> It was a dreary, drizzly day when the Russians approached Izbica. A "Red Militia" was organized by local Communists, whose leader was a former cobbler, a Jew named Abram Wajs. … As some Polish soldiers and officers were still in the town, the local Communists, together with the Russian soldiers, set off immediately to disarm them.

According to another Jew from that same town, the Bolsheviks

> were given a friendly welcome. Some of the young people joined the militia and wore red armbands. The Bolsheviks took the squires' cattle and carried it away on trucks. The militia helped them search for weapons. The Bolsheviks were only there for eight days. As they were leaving they advised the Jews to go with them. … About a hundred families decided to go, including us.

Similar reports come from Jews from ***Krzeszów*** ("many people joined the red militia") and ***Biłgoraj,*** as well as from ***Żółkiewka***.

In the village of ***Narol,***

> the local Communists helped the Bolsheviks to search for weapons. The Poles were outraged by that. When the Bolsheviks were leaving, some Polish friends of ours warned that the Polish population felt hostile toward the Jews because of the way the Jewish communists had behaved and advised us to leave the town as there might be acts of revenge. We told others about this, and almost all the Jews left in the direction of Rawa Ruska.

When the Soviets entered ***Hrubieszów*** on September 21st, Jews came out in full force to greet them. Within a short while, dressed in red armbands and carrying rifles, they stood guard outside all the important public buildings. A young Pole recalled how his Jewish friend, now a Soviet guard with a rifle, threatened to arrest him for using the Polish word for "Jew" ("Żyd"), rather than the Russian term "Evrei." (As we know from other accounts, the use of the Polish word "Żyd" could easily result in deportation to a concentration camp for five years, whereas offensive references to "Polish *Pans*" were the order of the day!)

Local Jews—small pedlars and traders—donned red armbands, obtained rifles, and helped the Soviets round up Polish soldiers. When, during a brief interlude, some Poles brought the soldiers something to drink and a few of them managed to escape, one of the servile Jews rushed to inform the Soviets. One Pole wrote:

> My God, you should have seen with what satisfaction the Jews pushed around and jabbed [Polish soldiers] with the bayonets on their rifles. What were our poor, tired and wounded Polish prisoners of war to do?

Another Pole recalled:

> On September 23rd, we were encircled by Soviet tanks and driven to a mill in Hrubieszów. We were surrounded by local militiamen—Jews—who in a very crude manner pointed out who [among the Poles] was in command. … The bulk of the officers and non-commissioned officers who did not seize the chance to escape are on the list of those murdered in Katyn. Many Jews, not only communists, filled positions in the Soviet administration and helped the NKVD capture Polish officers and administrative personnel.

When Wincenty Smal, an employee of the state revenue office in Hrubieszów, ventured into the village of ***Moniatycze*** on September 28, he was arrested by two members of the local Red militia, a Ukrainian named Mykola Shymanskyi and a Jew by the name of Jankiel (son of Abrum). He was led to the township office, now presided over by a Ukrainian secretary named Teodor Iosenko, where he was brutally beaten. That evening Smal was taken to the Catholic cemetery and executed with a bullet shot close range through the back of his skull. His bloodied body was left lying on its back in plain view by the main road to the cemetery.

When the demarcation line moved eastward to the River Bug in October 1939, German Nazis and Jews with red armbands (the latter were in the service of the Soviets) courted one another and exchanged pleasantries when the Germans came to collect wounded German soldiers from a hospital not far from Hrubieszów. These congenial scenes were all the more surprising given the ongoing German expulsions of Jews from the area, and their being driven back by Soviet guards.

Such conduct on the part of Jews—their blatant displays of hostility toward Poland and Poles, their over-zealousness and utter servility in serving their new master—cannot be explained away by the tenuous argument that the Jews were simply glad to see that it was the Soviets, rather than the Germans, who arrived there first. Moreover, the treatment of captured Polish soldiers understandably incensed the local Polish population and created a deep rift along ethnic lines.

Dr. Zygmunt Klukowski observed conditions in ***Szczebrzeszyn***:

> Around 5 A.M. [on September 27, 1939] the first Soviet soldiers entered Szczebrzeszyn. After a short stay at City hall they left again. A few hours later I noticed several civilian Communists wearing red bands on their left arms. Around 4 P.M. I left the hospital to find out any news. I saw Polish soldiers from whom the Communists were taking belts, haversacks, and map cases. The Communists took the administration into their own hands. … Just before dark I noticed a large group of Polish soldiers coming into the city. The Communists tried to take their possessions, but the local people standing on either side of the soldiers took so strong a position that they retreated.
>
> Many Jews left Szczebrzeszyn [on October 7th] with the Soviet army, especially those who were part of the Red Militia.

A Polish resident of that town recalled:

> It soon transpired that the main task of the "red militia" was to disarm Polish soldiers and, at the same time, to seek out Polish officers who, like Polish policemen, were handed over to the NKVD. They were all deported to the USSR where they perished.
>
> The "red militia" was formed mostly by Jewish youth, who had full rights as citizens of Poland. They now wreaked their rage on soldiers returning from the war. I saw how they surrounded one of them and, putting the barrel of a rifle to his back, took off his boots and belt and led him through the town. I knew these Jews and I was terror-stricken. Another time a few "red militiamen" attempted to lead a few soldiers, but some people who happened to pass by started to form a barrier around them so as to allow them to escape. The militiamen became more and more aggressive and a scuffle ensued. All of a sudden an older, important-looking military man sprang away, took out his revolver and yelled out: "Get away you Jews, because I'll shoot." The frightened militiamen fled.
>
> During these street occurrences younger girl guides from a social assistance troop started to patrol the roads leading to the town and warned military men about the danger. They pointed out homes where the soldiers could change into civilian clothes.

Another eyewitness, a local priest, paints a similar picture:

> In Szczebrzeszyn and its environs Communists surfaced, and almost all of them were young Jews. They put on red armbands, started to assume "power," and formed a "people's militia." Above all they started to disarm individual Polish soldiers, robbing them, tearing off their uniforms, and shooting officers as "bourgeois." They supported Soviet Russia and prophesied revenge and death for Poland. They were overjoyed at the fall of Poland. … They hung red flags around the town, and even on the bell tower of the church near the town square. Until now I had believed that everyone thought of Poland as I did, including Polish Jews. They, however, did not regard Poland as their homeland, but just as their country of residence …

On September 29th, two Jews apprehended Wincenty Panasiuk, a Polish platoon commander, and brought him to the makeshift headquarters of the Red militia in ***Frampol***. During his interrogation by commander A.R. "Nuchym" and his militiamen, the Pole refused to remove the Polish eagle from his cap and his military shoulder straps with insignia. When "Nuchym" attempted to remove these by force, the Pole apparently struck him. The engraged militiamen stabbed the Polish officer cadet to death. His body was dragged out into a field and buried secretly. The fate in store for more than a dozen members of the Polish community by the largely Jewish revolutionary committee was cut short by the surprise Soviet withdrawal after a brief six-day occupation. Among those listed for deportation were military officers, political figures, municipal officials, the fire chief, the local Catholic pastor, the church organist, teachers—in other words, virtually the entire leadership of the Polish community. Not one Jew was targeted.

The local collaborators were steadfast in their loyalty to the Soviet Union. In ***Siedlce,*** which the Soviets occupied on September 29, 1939, with the help of the civil guard, arrests of some 170 members of the local Polish élite (and a few Jewish community leaders), among them the mayor and Catholic bishop, ensued

immediately with the help of the newly formed civil guard. Just before the Soviet retreat on October 9, the prisoners were forced to march to the stronghold of Brześć on the Bug River, which remained in Soviet hands, under the guard of the Soviet soldiers and Jewish militiamen. Local Communist supporters followed left the town before the Soviets cordially handed it over to the Nazis in an official ceremony.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A Smooth Transition

In order to carry out the planned sweeps of Poles and other targeted groups, reliance on local collaborators was indispensable. Civilian denunciations took on massive proportions. Lists of people to be deported had to be carefully prepared with the assistance of local people, very often Jews. Polish historians confirm that Jews continued to play a prominent role in the Red militia, the right hand of the NKVD, throughout the Soviet occupation. (According to one Jewish author, the customary sight of Jewish militiamen patrolling the streets resulted in Poles referring to the Bolshevik regime as "Jewish rule.") Enthusiastic supporters of the Soviet regime also had an important administrative, economic, social and propaganda role to play.

Jan Tomasz Gross, an American sociologist of Polish-Jewish origin, explains why the transition to Soviet rule went so smoothly.

> Even before the Soviets entered, citizens' committees or militias were spontaneously formed in many places to replace the local Polish administration, which had either fled or lost the ability to enforce order. … These committees often acted as hosts to Red Army units. … in the first moment of encounter, the Soviet commanders relied on such welcoming committees and militias. The Soviets armed them or authorized them to carry the weapons that they had already acquired … Their primary immediate task involved ferreting out hiding Polish officers and policemen.
>
> These first militias were a strange lot. In some areas, particularly in the larger towns where the majority of the 1.7 million Jews living in this territory dwelt, they were predominantly Jewish, often organized by communist sympathizers. …
>
> In any case, the initial collaboration of ethnic minorities allowed for the effective penetration of local society. The effect of this collaboration on the occupier's administration cannot be overestimated. … They were carrying out a social revolution in eastern Poland, which could not be accomplished without *local* support …
>
> A new administration was quickly established in the conquered territories. … In higher administrative echelons, the *gmina* [the smallest territorial administrative unit], either Soviet officials or Polish communist sympathizers (usually Jews) always held supervisory positions. In addition to committees, militia detachments were formed, which were soon subsumed under the command of the NKVD (the Soviet secret police) operatives. This was the network through which the social and political transformation was to be implemented.
>
> In the first phase of the takeover, committees were used mainly for expropriations and arrests. But the Soviets soon gave them a more important task: a mass mobilization of the local population in support of the new regime. On October 22, barely one month after they crossed the Polish frontier, the Soviets organized a plebiscite in eastern Poland. [This was a key component of the

incorporation of these territories into the Soviet Union.] … After assisting in the initial exercise of intimidating the local population, the committees were then supposed to draw the inhabitants together and mobilize them on behalf of the new regime.

Israeli historian Ben-Cion Pinchuk paints a similar picture:

Indicative of the human resources and potential in the Jewish community was the important role played by the Jews during the transition period and the first phase of organizing the new regime. There were many places, usually those removed from the major routes of the advancing Red Army, where the interregnum lasted for some days. The power vacuum created was filled quite often by local temporary executive committees. Jews played a prominent role in those committees, which lasted in many places until they were replaced by officials from the Soviet Union.

The creation of the temporary committees was a local initiative … There were places where committees were created to organize the reception for the Soviet units and provide what they considered new Soviet-like authority as a temporary replacement for the disintegrating Polish administration. 'Revolutionary committees', as some of the committees were called, according to numerous Polish reports consisted almost entirely of Jews, with a few Ukrainians. A citizens' militia served as the executive tool of the committees. In the two organizations Jews played a dominant role, according to Polish sources. Jewish communists tried in some places to establish what they considered a Soviet administration. The committees behaved as if they were the government until the entrance of the Red Army. They initiated 'socialist' reforms, occasionally coming into conflict with the local population.

Expression of suppressed grudges and hatreds against the haughty Polish officials could be detected during the transition. … it was a time for settling scores, a time of retribution. Detectives and policemen were disarmed and arrested. Polish officials reported that they were told by local Jews 'Your time has passed, a new epoch begins.' The Polish population felt itself alienated and threatened and tried to avoid public attention … There were many instances of arbitrariness and of settling accounts with those who were well-to-do or in authority in the old regime, Jews and Poles alike. Those who were Communists before were 'engaged now on their own in "nationalizing" stores, houses, merchandise, and settling old grudges. Arbitrarily they make arrests and investigations,' related a survivor. Harassment of the more affluent, expropriation and distribution of goods among the poor without authorization from the incoming regime, were typical of the transition time. The persecution, expropriations, and occasional imprisonment were indicative of the social changes that would take place. …

Jews participated in disproportionate numbers in the Soviet-established institutions during the first few weeks of the new regime [and also afterwards—*M.P.*]. … The Polish population could not serve as a source of manpower for the new institutions … The Jewish community particularly in the shtetlach constituted a large reservoir of manpower, relatively well-educated, reliable as far as its outside relations were concerned and, what was equally important, available and eager to cooperate.

> Jewish youth formed special organizations whose role was to facilitate the establishment of the new regime. In many places the first Soviet-appointed institutions contained a very high proportion of Jews. Governmental and economic institutions, the militia in particular—organized by the authorities as a local police force—employed many Jews. The shtetl Jews … were willing to fill every available opening, thus playing an important role in the initial stages of building the Soviet system in former Eastern Poland.
>
> During the transition period the local Communists were used … in helping build up the Soviet system. After the formal annexation local Communists were systematically removed from responsible positions, some were even arrested. Many of them received subordinate administrative appointments, particularly in fields where knowledge of local conditions or direct contact with the population was required. They were employed in factories, schools, the militia, as NKVD informers and later as propagandists in the election campaigns.

Israeli historian Aharon Weiss concurs with this assessment:

> From the first days of Soviet rule, the Jews were absorbed into the state administration, together with all its offshoots, without any restriction, and they were represented in it to an extent exceeding their proportion of the population as a whole. There are some who hold that political considerations played a part in the inclusion of a relatively high proportion of Jews in the Soviet administration. The Soviets saw in the Jews an element loyal to the new regime, and sometimes even sympathetic to it. The Soviets were aware of the hostile attitude of the Poles … There was a similar situation among the Ukrainians, who were imbued with strong nationalistic feelings. These facts were very well known to the Soviet authorities when they came to man the administrative machine, the main purpose of which was to carry out Soviet policy and assist in the establishment of the new regime. And so the Jews, perhaps more than the other two nations in Eastern Galicia, met the requirements of the authorities. The Jews at this time had no political ambitions such as would have excited the suspicions of the Soviets or given them cause to exercise reserve.

Israeli historian Dov Levin, who exaggerates the role of prewar Communists and is rather reticent and sketchy about the concrete activities of the largely Jewish Red militia, writes:

> During the preparations for the arrival of the Red Army, and immediately after its advent, young Jews in many locations formed semi-military groupings with names like "People's Militia," "Workers' Guard," and so on. It was the task of these organizations to maintain local security, order, and sound administration. Above all, they were to prevent any disturbances as the Red Army came in. These youngsters often armed themselves with light weapons left behind by the Polish police. In lieu of uniforms, they tied red ribbons to their sleeves. The very fact of armed Jews visibly imposing their order made their fellow Jews even more eager to greet the Soviet forces.

In the very first days of the Red Army presence in eastern Poland, parts of Romania and the Baltic countries—and, in certain cases, even preceding the takeover—Jews were active in setting up the institutions of the new government. They were prominent in guard formations of the militia, bodies known as revolutionary or provisional "committees," and so on. The presence of Jews in these organizations was conspicuous in the towns and cities. Some participants belonged to Jewish leftist circles; and some were young adults who identified with the Soviet regime despite the lack of a defined ideological background. Most, however, were Communist Party members who, having just emerged from prison or the underground, regarded themselves as natural partners in laying the foundations of the new regime.

In the Soviet military administration if was widely (and correctly) believed at the time that the Jewish minority was one of the most reliable elements in existence at that stage. This was especially true in eastern Poland, where the Soviet authorities had not had time to prepare properly for the new situation in view of the dizzying speed of events in the autumn of 1939. Jews were visible in all agencies of the civil administration as the Soviet regime consolidated itself before the official annexation of the western Ukraine and western Belorussia in November, 1939.

… A Jew headed the provisional committee of the town of Stryj. In Borislav [Borysław], well-known Communists who had spent many years in Polish prisons assumed important positions in the municipal administration. According to Jewish sources, Jews accounted for 70 percent of the members of the militia in certain Eastern Galician localities. …

A new Jewish elite of sorts, composed of officials and confidantes of the new establishment, took shape at this time. Its members were people who, until the Red Army takeover, had been marginal players in the arena of Jewish public activity. This new elite replaced, to some extent, the veteran elite that was immobilized, silenced or eliminated by the circumstances of the new war and the new realities. This trend persisted even after Ukrainians and Belorussians dislodged the Jewish functionaries who had established the provisional institutions.

Many Jews, confident that the changes following the Soviet annexation would be long-lasting, preferred to adjust to the new circumstances. Quite a few collaborated with the authorities, some out of ideological identification and others for reasons of sympathy and gratitude. …

Unlike non-Jewish resistance groups affiliated with the majority peoples (e.g., Ukrainians and Lithuanians), Zionist groups did not reject the fact of the annexation of their areas of residence.

[Zionist youth] movements did not regard themselves as enemies of the regime, instead hoping that over time the regime would change its policies regarding Judaism and Zionism. … none of them (not even Betar) professed hostile trends or thoughts, and all were careful to avoid any manifestation of anti-Sovietism.

Labeling of the Soviet administration as a "Jewish regime" became widespread when Jewish militiamen helped NKVD agents send local Poles into exile. … Landlords and estate owners must have harbored much bitterness when forced to greet, with strained politeness, young Jews who came to confiscate their property.

One of the most surprising metamorphoses was the overnight transformation of ardent Zionists into militant Communists, which is remarked on by a number of observers (this time by Professor Karol Estreicher of the Jagiellonian University):

> In ***Skole***, a small town in the Carpathians [near Stryj], the leader of the local Zionist youth organization of "Chalucs" [Hechalutz] became a communist immediately, and transformed the club into a Bolshevik one. The portrait of Stalin supplanted the picture of Herzl in the common room, but the membership of the organization remained the same.

According to Jewish-Belorussian historian Evegenii Rozenblat, many Jews occupied leading positions in the NKVD apparatus and judicial system, which played key roles in subjugating the conquered territories. As of October 1940, more than forty percent of all positions in the judicial apparatus of the Pińsk region were held by Jews. Local Jewish recruits were bolstered by the arrival of large numbers of Soviet Jews in the service of an oppressive regime whose aim was to destroy all vestiges of Polish nationhood. Of the 2,789 apparatchiks sent to Białystok in September and October 1939 (this number does not include functionaries of the militia and NKVD), 600 (or 21.5 percent) were Jews.

That there weren't more Jews in the service of the new regime was not a function of a shortage of eager Jews but because many of those who volunteered their services, especially prewar Communists from central Poland, were rebuffed and even repressed. However,

> In contrast to the hurdles that the [Communist] Party placed in the path of persons seeking admission—newcomers and veterans alike—the Komsomol and the Pioneer (Communist Party children's organization) branches opened their doors to teenagers and children. Membership in these organizations became highly acceptable, and Jewish youth thronged to them. This was especially so in the towns and the outlying areas, where youth movements had played a paramount role. All were welcome, even those who had previously belonged to Zionist, religious, or Bundist movements or parties. …
>
> The Pioneers also attracted relatively large numbers of Jews.

Symptomatic of the prevalent mood were the long line-ups of Jews, among them many elderly people, which began to form in front of the polling stations hours in advance of their early morning opening on October 22, 1939 to cast their votes for Stalin and the annexation of Poland's Eastern Borderlands. They did so ostentatiously and often with great enthusiasm.

The electoral committee in Lwów was headed by prominent Jewish communists, members of the Communist Party of "Western Ukraine," such as Jerzy Borejsza (Beniamin Goldberg), his brother Józef Różański (Goldberg), Ozjasz Szechter (later Michnik), Hilary Minc, and others. After the Soviet "liberation" of Poland in 1944, they adroitly switched their "national" allegiance and were installed in leading positions in Stalinist Poland.

CHAPTER NINE

Positions of Authority and Privilege

It did not take long for the Jews to leave their mark on all aspects of life under the new regime. Although the top positions were reserved for Soviet bureaucrats, among whom were many Jews, the middle and lower administrative position were given over to local supporters. Jewish and Polish sources confirm that Jews filled these positions en masse. Although Jewish historians claim that Jewish overrepresentation in administrative positions dropped dramatically after the first few months of Soviet rule, this has not been substantiated by any in-depth research. As we shall see, many Jewish memoirs also dispute that assertion. It is true, however, that the Soviets were far more careful in designating candidates for "elected" positions. Ukrainians and Belorussians were favoured there for the sake of appearance, but these positions were largely ceremonial. Moreover, there was a large influx of Jews from the Soviet Union sent as tools of the newly imposed Soviet regime, including many members of the security apparatus. According to historian Dov Levin,

> Many Soviet Jews were sent west to the annexed areas as administrative and economic clerks in the civil and military bureaucracies. … Many were assigned key positions and ruled with a high hand. The locals [i.e. Jews] came to resent the arrogant, contemptuous "easterners," who habitually dissembled about the high standard of living in the USSR.

According to the ***Rohatyn*** Memorial Book,

> The Jews welcomed the Soviet soldiers openly … Jews were employed by the Soviet officials in the administration and even in the local militia. Jews went gladly to these tasks … Each of these artels [cartels or workers' associations] or cooperatives was headed by … in most cases a Jew. … workers in the artels worked under the guidance of Jewish directors. Control over the factories was in the hands of the Party, which again had greater trust in the Jews than in the non-Jews.

In ***Dmytrów*** near Radziechów, "The Jews were elevated to government offices (treasury, courts, militia, schools, post office, county supervisor's office, etc.), and they were also employed to gather information [i.e., as informers] in the town and villages." Most of the agitators in the campaign leading up to the sham vote sanctioning the annexation of Eastern Poland were Jews, both Soviet and local.

In ***Sambor***, according to that town's memorial book, "Many Jews joined city and government services. The Russians trusted the Jewish population more than the Poles and Ukrainians, and, therefore, the higher posts were allotted to Jews."

According to a Jewish source, in ***Stanisławów,***

> At the outset of Soviet rule, several local Jewish communists worked in the interim town council, including A. Eckstein (vice mayor), Rozental (head of police), Kochman (his deputy), Mendel Blumenstein (head of the prison), Shkulnik (his deputy), and the lawyer Hausknecht (head of the post office).

The administrative positions in offices and factories were taken over by Jews and Ukrainians. The Poles were relegated to clerical positions and worked as labourers. The workers' councils were headed by party members sent from the Soviet Union for this purpose and, in some cases, by local Jews.

In ***Kuty,*** south of Kołomyja,

> A temporary local committee was organized, and a large number of the members were local Jewish Communists. There were also many Jewish youths in the militia …

In ***Żabie*** near Kosów Huculski,

> Hardly had the dust of the Soviet invasion settled when our local Communists assumed a self-important air and took over all the key posts in the municipal administration.

According to a Jewish source, in ***Zaleszczyki,***

> A group of Jewish communists held key positions in the new regime. When the war with Germany broke out [in June 1941], a small number of Jews—mainly Jewish communist activists—fled to the USSR. Scared of revenge by the Germans and Ukrainian nationalists, they fled to Chernowitz to hide.

In ***Brzeżany,*** the leading positions of authority were taken over by Jews:

> The first Soviet may of Brzezany was Kunio Grad, a Jew who had been a Communist and a political prisoner before the war. … Isaac Sauberberg, a Jewish ex-political prisoner, who was one of the most active members of the KPZU, the Communist Party of Western Ukraine in the area, was appointed head of the Financial Department. … Kuba Winter, a Jew who had been active in distributing illegal Communist propaganda … became head of the Brzezany post office.

> Itschie [Isaac Sauberberg] was appointed to several successive positions, and when the Soviets retreated in the summer of 1941, he and his family joined them. … The most prominent Jewish Communist in Brzezany was Elkana, or Kunio, Grad. His family too, like Itschie Sauberberg's, was a traditional Jewish family. … The peak of his career was his service as the first Soviet mayor of Brzezany in the fall of 1939, during the first weeks of the Soviet rule. He left Brzezany with the retreating Soviet admininstration in the summer of 1941. Kunio Grad was among the few Brzezany

Jews who survived the war in Russia. Grad lived after the war in Poland and served as an officer with the … Polish Security. Eventually he emigrated to Canada and died there.

In ***Czortków,*** according to a Jewish source,

When the Jewish Communists came home [after their release from jail], they helped to organize a new government system in our city. The Russian authorities appointed a Jewish mayor and he appointed many Jewish and Ukrainian Communists to various top positions at city hall, police, fire, banking, and other institutions.

Within days, the police came at night, with prepared lists, to round up the Polish intelligentsia, government employees, army officers, and nationalists with their families were taken to the railway station. They were being expelled, and sent to Siberia. The same transport also included a few rich Jews who owned large stores, but their families were left behind.

With the reorganization of city life the Russians used the Jews in every aspect of commerce, banking, and reorganization of the villages according to their system. The educated Ukrainians took part in the reorganization, but the Poles had difficulties getting a decent job. They were considered second class citizens …

The Jews in ***Skałat*** adjusted quickly and well to the new conditions:

It was quite understandable that the Jews were able to adjust more easily to the new life, since the Soviet regime trusted the Jewish population more than it did the Gentiles. A significant portion of the Jews—the workers, the artisans and the working intelligentsia, therefore, took on leading roles in the economic and social life of the town. They held important positions in cooperatives and in communal and public institutions. No one group could have adjusted better to the newly created conditions of life that the Jews.

According to a Jewish testimony from ***Kamień Koszyrski*** in Polesia,

We formed a self-defense unit to maintain order in the town … We destroyed the ammunition left behind by the retreating [Polish] armies.

At the same time, Russian forces entered Poland. … Whatever weapons were left we turned over to them; we disbanded our self-defense unit and many of us enlisted in their militia.

In ***Krzemieniec***,

With the Russian conquest of the town (Sept. 22, 1939) a Jew, Moshe Sugan, a local Communist, was appointed mayor… In that time period a Jew, Avraham Rayz, was appointed chief of police…

When the Red Army arrived on the 22nd, it was received cheerfully. … a "temporary administration" was formed immediately—under the authority of the Russian army and

> politicians—to which were added some local clerks from the Jewish intelligentsia, and the Communists who were released from jails and returned to Kremenets.
>
> In general, the new regime showed a tendency to favor the Jews who were an intellectual and devoted element, while among the Polish, many were members of nationalistic movements. …
>
> In those days they said that during the Soviet regime…Jews received jobs in offices; Poles were permitted to deal in second-hand clothes…, Ukrainians were permitted to have their signs in Ukrainian…
>
> At the end of 1939 the citizens were ordered to vote, for or against, annexing the city to the Ukrainian-Soviet republic. Obviously the Jews voted for the annexation. …
>
> The termination of national Jewish life came without the need for action by the authorities. The Jews understood that under Soviet rule, public activities were not acceptable, and they had better concern themselves with their personal needs only. …
>
> All the Zionist and other organizations ceased to exist. All the skilled people devoted themselves to adapting to the new way of life. … the Zionist Hebrews are useful and faithful subjects to the Soviet regime. And, indeed, the Jews adapted themselves quickly to life under the new regime. …
>
> Key positions were given, generally, to party members who came from eastern Russia, and were "Easterners" {"Vastatshniki"), and were assisted by some local Communists. For example, Meir Pinchuk (a former member of "HaShomer HaTzair" turned Communist), was appointed in charge of the High School, and his wife of other schools. …
>
> It is interesting to note that some of the Jewish laborers who were leaning towards communism, thought that now they would be relieved from labor and would be given positions in government institutions, but the new authorities preferred choosing from the intelligentsia, and rejected them completely, or gave them a minor job, like in charge of a storage plant.

According to a Polish source, "either Bolsheviks or local Communists, most of them Jews, were appointed to the higher offices in the city. … In the New Year (1940) a Polish ten-year school was created. Pińczuk [Pinchuk], a Jew and a communist, was appointed director." From another source, we learn that the said Pińczuk had no prior background in the field of education. Elsewhere in that county: "They abolished Polish offices and put Bolsheviks and Jews in place of Poles."

Janina Sułkowska describes the conditions that pervaded every aspect of life in Krzemieniec:

> For Poles and those among the Ukrainian and Jewish communities who opposed the occupation, life was hell. The NKVD made good use of collaborators especially the local Communist Party which was almost exclusively Jewish. From headquarters in the Treasury Office, lavishly refurbished with plundered riches, the NKVD would decide the fate of victims over vodka and fine food—aided by Jews who for reasons ranging from politics to settling old scores, turned in their neighbours. They eagerly fulfilled the duty of every party member to spy on and denounce the citizenry, resulting in brutal interrogations and show trials where the usual sentence was eight years at hard labour in Siberia. Even walking down the street was an ordeal as the Russian secret police and the Jewish or Ukrainian militia would arrest a person on any pretext—even for being well-dressed.

What particularly disturbed me was the humiliation of my beloved Lyceum which was revered as a great Polish institution that welcomed students of all backgrounds: rich or poor, Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish. The Soviets methodically transformed it into a dreary and repressive model based on their Soviet system, and this required mass firings and arrests of Polish professors, staff and pupils. New directors and teachers were appointed from local unqualified Communists whose main attribute was loyalty to their Soviet overlords, and later personnel would be brought in from the USSR.

I could never forgive those Krzemiencian Jews, including friends, who played a great part in the destruction of an institution from which some had themselves graduated. Many Jews and Ukrainians however mourned the loss of this respected school, even as new students, Jewish and Ukrainian, were brought in to eradicate the despised Polish presence. …

My younger sister Wanda brought back horror stories of scholastic life under the vicious directorship of Pinchas Pinczuk [Pinchuk], a Jewish former student of the Lyceum who had been imprisoned in Poland for his Communist activities, and who now used Jewish students to betray Polish classmates who wore religious symbols or were patriotic, often with deadly consequences for the student and his or her family. As the deportations started, fewer and fewer of Wanda's classmates would appear in class. …

The Soviets emptied the school libraries and dumped the books into a pile for destruction, while the priceless Lyceum Library of 40,000 books was put into the hands of a young Jew who functioned as head censor and book-burner. The duties of school curator fell to two local Jews, one who was deemed qualified as he was an accountant with the publisher of Lyceum texts and material. The position of school inspector was taken over by a young Jewish female doctor who demanded that students donate money to the "International Organizations of Revolutionary Help"—with dire consequences for those who didn't pay. Jewish "assistants" in uniforms spread terror and enforced the new order which would see the number of Polish students decline drastically, including the arrest of a Polish professor and several students for belonging to "a counter-revolutionary organization." …

My mother, brother and I returned in a dejected mood from the election for delegates to the Soviet of the Union, in which the citizenry was "encouraged" by teenage Jewish thugs working as "propagandists" to publicly deposit a pre-filled ballot directly into the box—with a warning not to write anything on it.

We immediately began preparing a package of food for my father [Jan Sułkowski, the former county secretary] who had been arrested on Good Friday [1940] and was spending his third day at NKVD headquarters. We knew his arrest had been inevitable, but it was a shock when they bundled him off like some terrible criminal. Little did we know of the beatings he was presently undergoing. Later he would face a sham trial conducted by the Soviets and be sentenced to hard labour—on "evidence" given by his Jewish and Ukrainian employees. [Jan Sułkowski would be deported to the Gulag where he died never again seeing his wife or youngest daughter.]

The phenomenon of appointing unqualified Jews to teaching positions, mentioned above, was widespread. Historian Dov Levin concedes that "hundreds of young Jews, some lacking in higher

education, passed courses of several weeks' duration and were sent to work at all levels in the school system."

In ***Łomża,*** where denunciations were frequent, virtually all of the administrative offices and positions were occupied by Jews. In September of 1940, a high-ranking NKVD official from that town averred:

> The Jews supported us and only they continued to be visible. It also became fashionable for every director of an institution or business concern to boast that they no longer employed even one Pole.

In the nearby village of ***Przytuły,*** where the Jews greeted the Soviets with flowers,

> Only Jews were put in positions of authority. All the Poles who worked in the commune office were arrested. The Jews formed committees and persecuted the Poles. The head of the committee was Wileński. My brother had to hide on account of him because they wanted to shoot him. They often carried out searches and always at night. Many civil servants were arrested and shipped out without a trace. Property owned by the Poles was taken away and divided among the Jews and even among some Poles who conformed to Russian instructions.

In ***Stawiski,***

> The executive authority was handed over to the dregs of society from the national minorities [the only minority in that area was the Jews—*M.P.*]. The result was often frequent arrests, confiscations, evictions from homes, destruction of national monuments. The pre-election agitation was well organized; it started off with a thorough census of the local population.
>
> The first to be arrested were civil servants such as the mayor, the commune head, postal workers, government clerks, policemen, teachers, officers and the civilian population. … I remember well the first deportation in February 1940, the first transport of our population. A long string of wagons loaded with belongings and people. …
>
> The election committee was made up of NKVD members and local people who were favourably disposed toward Soviet authority. They were mostly Jews.

In ***Kolno,*** according to a Jewish source,

> Former Jewish communists—Marvid, Shlomo Krelenstein, Yissacher Niphke, Greenbaum and others, cooperated, out of ideological convictions and sincere faith, with the new rulers. … Zerach Stavisky, Akiva Kashipopa and some other Jewish fellows were employed by the Soviet militia …
>
> Several "artels" were established, including a tailors' artel directed by Michael Borech, and a bakers' artel headed by Teitelbaum, as well as shoemakers', carpenters', locksmiths' and other craftsmen's artels. Mendel Sokol, a former merchant, was held in high esteem by the new authorities and was appointed by the Soviet municipality to be superintendant of the construction of

> the new hospital, the public baths and other institutions. Later, they even entrusted him with the trench-fortifications, the front-line of defence near the town opposite the East-Prussian border.
>
> The first mass arrests occurred on the eve of March 13, 1940 and continued into the following day. Sixty-three families were seized … Afterwards arrests followed systematically.

In ***Kołaki Kościelne*** near Zambrów,

> the Soviet authorities took over the state offices … Next they created a militia consisting of ruffians, mostly from the Russian and Jewish population.

About ***Zabłudów*** near Białystok, where there had been a mixed civil militia comprised of Poles and Jews before the arrival of the Soviets, a Jewish source states:

> The civil and half army government settled in the old city hall (the magistrate): drafted civilian Soviets, most of them party members ruled there, and their leader, as we found out, was a Jew by the name Margolin. …
>
> Like every new and strange regime the Soviets needed collaborators (this time upon ideological background) from the population, which they could find easily, especially among us Jews, and from the White Russians, who saw themselves as the main partners in the upcoming changes. … Their innocence was based on revenge, and not on ideology … Most of the people that tried to be part of the new government came from the poor population …
>
> The town filled up with military personnel's family and Soviet clerks. Over time some of them became friendly, especially [toward] the Jews. The Polish, except for a few of them, stayed away from the Soviets and saw the Jews as collaborators …

In ***Zambrów,*** according to a Jewish source,

> The Russians entered Zambrov in September 1939. Their first act was the appointment of Fishman (Kaufmann's son-in-law) as Commissar of Zambrov.

According to a Jewish source, in ***Zaręby Kościelne*** near Ostrów Mazowiecka, where "first meeting with the Red army and the Jewish young men" was described as "ecstatic," a revolutionary committee and Jewish militia ("young men with red armbands and carrying Polish rifles") were soon in control.

> During the Russian occupation, the cultural and community life in Zaromb was adminstered by a committee: Chaim Mayer Faynztak, Leyzer Levin, Leytche Fridman, Eliohu Pravde and Rokhel Dishke. The Polish shoemaker, Vishilitzki, worked with them.

Jews in small towns felt particularly secure. In ***Nadwórna***, about 50 kilometres south of Stanisławów, the entire city administration was taken over by local Jews. (One Pole, who wore a red star on his hat to blend in, was greeted as "tovarishch" by Jewish militiamen he encountered during his short stay there.)

Another Jew recalled: "My father did not vote [in the Soviet elections], but we were not afraid that anything would happen to us, since ***Boćki*** was a small town where power was in the hands of the local Communists."

In ***Brańsk,***

> When Rabbi Benizon Kagan … applied to the local labor exchange for work, the bureau director told him that the matter could be arranged only if the rabbi declared himself to be an atheist. After complaints and appeals to the top Party echelons, Rabbi Kagan was assigned to a petty bookkeeping position and was even excused from work on the Sabbath and Jewish festivals.

In ***Dzisna*** county,

> The bolsheviks established 'selsovety' [village soviets], 'raikomy' [regional (county) committees] and other committees which the Jews, local communists, and those who arrived from Russia joined. The first founder of [the] militia was a Jew Srol Zelikman, a local citizen. … The bolsheviks persecuted the Poles a lot in prisons. In ***Wilejka*** where the prison was one could hear shouts and moans, so in order not to hear them the bolsheviks started up engines, to drown out the moans.

In ***Lubcz*** near Nowogródek, according to a Jewish source,

> Not only was the chairman of the local soviet Jewish; so were the managers of all the retail shops, without exception. The same was true for a local winery and canned food factory, the district office, the chief accounting division of the local tax office, and a footwear cooperative. Moreover, a majority of the 200 Soviet clerks who were brought in to fill positions of responsibility were Jews.

In ***Gródek*** near Mołodeczno,

> Our shtetl, the village of Horodok [Gródek], fell to the Soviets. …
>
> The Communist Party with the help of a few local, and until then clandestine, Jewish Communists took over the town. Mass meetings with communist orators spewing propaganda were held to "brainwash" us. Occasional arrests continued. Secrecy and spying on neighbors became a way of life.

In ***Kleck*** near Nieśwież, not far from the Soviet border,

> The Jews cheered the Russians as their liberators from Polish Fascism, which had made anti-Semitism an official policy between the two World Wars. … The gentiles on the other hand, were

> dismayed and badly frightened. … the Communist youth, suddenly promoted from "illegals" to "guardians of law and order," came out of hiding; they marched through the streets with rifles given them by the Russians …
>
> large numbers of the poorer Jews had marked pro-communist sympathies and the majority of the commissars in the towns, as well as the *politruks* [political commissars], were Jews.

A Jew by the name of Matvei Kolotov (Motl Kolotnitsky) was the Soviet functionary sent to ***Słonim*** to set up a civil administration. The building that had once housed the Polish Savings Fund was taken over by the Gosbank (the Soviet government bank). Kolotov replaced the Polish clerks with "Jewish boys and girls, with a few Russian clerks thrown in." Several newly appointed Gosbank officials were former executives of the Jewish Commercial Bank and the local Jewish People's Bank. These two institutions and all their employees had been transferred to new Gosbank branch.

In ***Drohiczyn,*** as in many other localities, Polish teachers were dismissed from their positions and replaced by Jewish ones who often lacked the basic qualifications.

According to a Jewish testimony from the ***Lwów*** region, "From the start the Jews occupied most of the lower positions in the Soviet administration, although the key posts were always in the hands of Soviet officials." A Jew from Lwów recalled:

> Workers councils were introduced in all factories and workshops, and a civilian militia was organized. The members of this militia were chiefly workers and young Jews.

Henryk Reiss, a Jew who settled in Lwów, wrote:

> At that time being Jewish in Lwów made life easier. The Soviet authorities did not trust the Poles nor the Ukrainians who dreamed of a free Ukraine … There remained the Jews. They were the only ones who greeted the Red Army with flowers, like saviours. The Polish government in exile in London appealed not to cooperate with the Soviet occupiers. The Poles, at the outset at least, did not report for employment. They waited. The Jews could not or would not wait. It was easy to get positions. For Jews it was even very easy. …
>
> Ninety percent of the members of our (engineering) association were Jews. A similar situation prevailed in all of the associations and cooperatives in Lwów which encompassed all of the branches of industry, production and trade. Is it surprising that the Poles, who endeavoured not to cooperate with the Russians in accordance with instructions from the Polish government in London, regarded the Jews as collaborators, as Bolshevik agents? …
>
> Our entire technical staff sat around their desks almost idle.

Another Jew reported that many Jews were employed in all of the offices in the city and that Jews were put in charge of most of the stores, warehouses and business establishments. In ***Drohobycz,*** and doubtless

in many other localities, Jews used their positions as overseers of warehouses to siphon off foodstuff and products that soon became scarce for the average consumer.

Moreover, the often-repeated claim that Soviet policies resulted in the ruination of the Jewish merchant class and tradespeople is an unwarranted generalization that must be looked at in context. The bulk of smal shopkeepers and self-employed artisans generally fared well, and even owners of larger enterprises often remained in place as directors of their nationalized firms, as was the case in ***Bielska Wola*** near Sarny, in Volhynia:

> My father, as the owner of a flour mill, was considered at the time to be a "kulak" (a rich person). … In the end, the mill was bought by the government for a token sum, and my father was appointed manager, at the workers' request. He was also appointed manager of a fulling mill, which had been competing with us and which, until then, had belonged to a Polish landowner. That mill was larger than ours and more sophisticated. … He was also appointed accountant of the mill, and thanks to those two appoitments, our situation improved tremendously, compared to what it had been when my father worked on his own. The Soviet regime, in our case, had done us good …

According to Dov Levin,

> Many Jews found positions planning and implementing the nationalization policy, either as "trustees" of the regime or as experts. The latter … included former owners of plants and businesses. Some of the non-Jewish experts (Poles in the western Ukraine and western Belorussia, for example) were reluctant to fill the positions offered them for national and political reasons; in some areas this gave Jewish officials access to prominent economic positions (at least at first) at a rate far exceeding their share of the population.
>
> A conspicuous example of continuity was the baking industry in Lvov [Lwów], which had been dominated by Jews until the war. The bakeries were nationalized in late 1939, aggregated into a single municipal enterprise, and converted into branches of this municipal enterprise for baked goods. … Apart from this largely representative position [i.e. the head of the enterprise—a Ukrainian Soviet], all the work—management, planning, and direct labor at the ovens—remained in Jewish hands. Former bakery owners … now wage earners, served as work foremen, among other functions.
>
> In Wolhynia [Volhynia], and other areas of western Belorussia and Lithuania, many Jews continued working in the lumber industry. Now, however, they held governmental inspection and management positions that formerly had been reserved for Poles and Lithuanians …
>
> Since few non-Jews were engaged as artisans in the towns and cities, quite a few artels were Jewish through and through. … Leadership in the small artels was usually exercised by local Jews.
>
> In December, 1939, *Der Stern* published a letter signed by Jews from western Ukraine, thanking Comrade Stalin "for having saved [them] from the economic distress and unemployment" that

> prevailed before the war in Poland. … Although the initiative behind these notices had presumably been taken by official agencies, it seems likely that, at least in the initial period, these pieces reflected some degree of genuine, sincere identification of certain Jewish groups with the policies of the new regime.
>
> One cannot deny, however, that many Jews derived many direct and indirect advantages from the new regime. For one thing, Jewish youth gained access to extensive opportunities for study. For another, the new regimen was highly beneficial to wage earners in certain industries. …
>
> It therefore comes as no surprise that the working class and other rank-and-file harbored genuine sympathy for the new regime—at least in the first stages of sovietization—along with gratitude ans expectations of further economic improvement. Most of the artisans, too, suffered no detriment; indeed, some found themselves better off than before …

Despite claims to the contrary, social justice sorely eluded Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland in many respects, as illustrated by the following example from ***Lwów***, a city with a Polish majority (Ukrainians predominated in the countryside). After the Soviet takeover Poles were largely excluded from higher education:

> The entire character of the University of Lwów changed during the Soviet occupation. Prior to the war, the percentage of students broke down as follows: Poles, 70 percent; Ukrainians, 15 percent; Jews, 15 percent. Under the Soviets, the percentage changed to 3 percent, 12 percent, and 85 percent respectively.

Contemporary accounts of Jews, gathered in the underground archives of the Warsaw Ghetto under the direction of Emanuel Ringelblum, reinforce this picture and attest to the privileged position enjoyed by the Jewish population under Soviet rule. These accounts are important for three reasons. One, they were usually written by educated people shortly after the events they witnessed and are generally more sophisticated than memoirs and accounts written by local residents long after war and through the prism of the Holocaust or Gulag. Two, they were written by outsiders who tend to be more objective about local conditions than the residents themselves, who are generally absorbed with the fate of their own families and communities. Three, the fact that these themes appear in a number of accounts (though not all—doubtless because the observers were reluctant to write honestly about such prejudicial occurrences or were simply unconcerned about them) is a clear indication of how glaring conditions must have been to the perceptive onlooker: there would have been no conceivable reason for them to have embellished or exaggerated what they saw. The following accounts are illustrative.

A Jewish resident of ***Białystok*** noted: “In practice, in filling positions and offices Jews were somewhat favoured because they were trusted more than Poles who were treated with some disrespect.” Of the 267 students accepted into the Pedagogical Institute in this predominantly Polish region, 210 were Jews and 29

Belorussians. Almost all of the principals of the Polish-language schools that remained open were replaced by non-Poles, a very large percentage of them Jews.

According to Polish reports, by December 1939 the entire administration in Białystok was in the hands of officials from Soviet Belorussia and Jewish Communists, both local people and refugees from the German zone. With this realignment, the attitude of the Jews also changed to one of hostility, contempt, and derision. Only a very small portion of the Jewish population behaved properly.

In ***Wilno***, the Soviets with the help of local Communists, mainly Jews, seized Polish administrative, agricultural and financial institutions. According to Dr. Shlomo Katz, who served in the Workers' Guard, at least 80 percent of the guards were Jewish, and a significant number held administrative positions. In many cases, attitudes changed overnight, and Jews ignored or even turned on their Polish friends and neighbours. There was also open rejoicing at the defeat of Poland. "Your rule is over," an elated Jew was heard to say in a crowded train. "We will now be in charge."

A young Jew who lived in Wilno recalled:

> The Bolsheviks were generallly disposed favourably toward the Jews and had total confidence in them. They were assured of their entire sympathy and devotion. For that reason they put Jews in all the managerial and responsible positions and did not entrust them to the Poles who had occupied them previously.

A Jewish woman from Wilno summed up the situation candidly and quite aptly when she wrote:

> Under Bolshevik rule an anti-Jewish current grew significantly. In large measure the Jews themselves were responsible for this … At every turn they mocked Poles, yelled out that their Poland was no more … The Jewish Communists dallied with the patriotic sentiments of Poles, denounced their illegal conversations, pointed out Polish officers and former government officials, freely worked for the NKVD, and took part in arrests. … The Bolsheviks on the whole treated Jews favourably, had complete faith in them and were confident of their devoted sympathy and trust. For that reason they put Jews in all of the leading and influential positions which they would not entrust to Poles who formerly occupied them.

In ***Grodno***, a Jewish source recorded:

> Poles were denied access to senior public-service positions … and former senior officials and leading personalities were arrested … and exiled to remote regions of Russia together with their families.

In the place of Poles, whom the Soviets did not trust, came Jews, in whom the Soviets had "complete confidence." According to historian Evgenii Rozenblat, 405 out of 564 positions in local industry, or approximately 72 percent, were allocated to Jews. According to another Jewish observer from Grodno,

> When the Bolsheviks entered Polish territory, they were very mistrustful of the Polish population, and they fully trusted the Jews. They deported to Russia the more influential Poles and those who before the war held important jobs, and all of the offices were filled mostly with Jews, who everywhere were entrusted with positions of power. For these reasons, the Polish population generally assumed a very hostile attitude. … It needs to be mentioned that the Jews themselves stirred up this hatred because as soon as the Russian armies entered, they showed their disregard for the Poles and often humiliated them. The coming of the Bolsheviks was greeted by Jews with great joy. Now they felt proud and secure, they almost considered themselves in charge of the situation; towards the Poles they were condescending and arrogant, and they often let them feel their powerlessness and scorned them because of it. In Grodno there were numerous occurrences when a Polish woman approached a Jewish vegetable vendor who refused to sell to her: 'Get out of here, you Pollack, I don't want to know you.' There were many Jews who at any opportunity took special delight in mentioning to Poles that their time was over, that now nothing depended on them, and that they had to obey the Soviet authority.
>
> The economic situation of the Jews in the occupied territory was much better than that of the Polish population. While the Poles had to earn their living through hard work, the Jews took the better jobs and were employed in lighter work. Poles were mostly employed in factories and kolkhozes, whereas Jews preferred to work as clerks in warehouses and shops, etc. Even if salaries in these positions were officially much lower than those of workers in factories, while working as clerks, shop assistants, and warehouse attendants they had the opportunity to take advantage of their skills in [illegal] trading and speculation; they manipulated in various ways and thus attained significant private incomes.

As described above, Jewish vendors often refused to sell goods to Poles. Edmund Bosakowski from ***Białozórka*** near Krzemieniec recounts that a Jewish woman who ran the local cooperative angrily motioned to him to leave the store after addressing him in an ostentatious and derogatory manner and in Ukrainian: "I don't sell to *Lakhs*!" Had a Pole spoken derogatory words such as these to a Jew, the Pole would have been arrested. On the other hand, Jews could and did address Poles in this fashion with impunity. Jewish youths in ***Wilno*** excelled in throwing Poles out of food lines. The harassment was so blatant that Soviet functionaries felt compelled to come to the assistance of Poles.

On the other hand, Poles, who were often underemployed, had to resort to selling their belongings (jewelry, clothing, etc.) to Jewish black marketeers for a fraction of their value in order to purchase needed food supplies. It appears to have been a widespread phenomenon that Jews tried to take advantage of the dire situation of many Christians by buying up their possessions for a mere pittance. That was often the fate of property that had been seized from Polish deportees and auctioned off.

In some localities Poles were evicted from their homes which were then taken over by Jews (e.g., in ***Jaremecz*** and ***Mikuliczyn***). When the village of ***Miłków*** was cleared of its Polish inhabitants (they were deported by cattle car to Bessarabia in the dead of winter in January 1940), Jews descended on the village with their carriages and dismantled and plundered what remained. In many cases, Polish property was

simply confiscated by Jewish militiamen or by Jewish neighbours who had ostensibly taken it for "safekeeping."

The following testimony is from the small town of ***Telechany***, in Polesia:

> We lived in Telechany near Pińsk where my father, Stefan Boratyński, was a judge in the municipal court. … My father always purchased cigarettes and other small items he needed from a Jew named Szamszel. … My mother also made her purchases in a Jewish shop next door … Before the war these Jews behaved in a very friendly manner, but as soon as the Bolsheviks arrived they joined forces with them. They pretended to be friendly, but in an underhanded way they "informed" us of what might happen and offered their help. …
>
> Right after the entry of the Bolsheviks, some Jews told my parents that they should hide their clothing because it would, in all likelihood, be taken from us. I remember very well packing suits and fur coats belonging to my parents … Two huge suitcases (that folded twice) were taken by these Jews for safekeeping. Soon after another man arrived—sent, it appears, by these Jews—who told us to get ready by evening a desk and two more suits which would be "borrowed." By November [1939] we were living in two nearly empty rooms. Our furniture was "borrowed" and some people had occupied the remainder of the dwelling.
>
> The situation became progressively worse since we had to live from something. My mother approached Szamszel to return the clothing he had taken for safekeeping. This exchange probably lasted for a few days and finally he told her that he would not return anything. It was all his and we shouldn't make any claims or things might get worse. What was "worse" actually occurred on December 21, when my father was taken away. Two days later he was shipped out of Telechany; to this day I do not know where he was murdered. In April 1940 my mother and I were deported to Kazakhstan, where we spent six years. Szamszel and others like him remained in Telechany.

A Jew by the name of Józef Kohn headed up a revolutionary committee which greeted the Red army as it entered ***Śniatyn*** through triumphal gates erected by local Jews and Communists. His wife, also an ardent Communist who ran a kindergarten before the war, led her prepped-up young students to the spectacle. Kohn was eventually arrested in 1940 for stealing property that he had confiscated from nationalized Jewish businesses, an apparent "victim" of his fellow Jews' wrath. Kohn and his wife survived their deportation and returned after the war to Stalinist Poland where they received plum government positions. Nothing is known of Jews suffering punishment for stealing from Poles.

Jews also used their privileged positions to push their weight around and openly to deride Poles. In ***Klewań*** near Równe, line-ups for bread that formed at four o'clock in the morning were watched over by Jewish militiamen who would beat up or throw people out of line arbitrarily.

A Polish woman from ***Rożyszcze***, who had waited five hours in a line-up to purchase some meat, lost her turn when a Jewish woman let in another Jew who bought the last piece. When the Polish woman complained, she was called a "Polish mug whose time had come to an end." A young girl recalled how she was pulled out of a food line by her hair by a Jewish woman who screamed at her, "Your days are over. It's now our turn and there's no room for you here."

Even Jewish children readily succumbed to the temptation of using their junior positions to ridicule and harass their Polish schoolmates. In ***Krzemieniec,*** Polish students wearing miniature Polish eagles under their lapels were accosted by Jewish students, now young Communist Pioneers with red bandannas, who openly mocked the emblem of Poland, their former country. "Take off that rooster," one of them snapped. Needless to say, Jews faced no sanctions for such all-too-frequent anti-Polish outbursts.

Jewish accounts from the Ringelblum archives, gathered during the early years of the war, attest to the fact that, contrary to the assertions made by Jewish historians, the Jews were not only privileged at the outset, but retained their privileged position throughout the Soviet occupation.

One Jewish account from ***Lwów*** states: "The attitude of other nationalities toward the Jews was strained throughout this period to some degree, and this was brought about exclusively by the fact that Jews pushed to take over the leading positions." Until April 1941, "the majority of the better jobs were filled by Jews." Foreign observers saw matters much the same way. The British Consul from Galați, Romania, reported that "Jews received preferential treatment and were given administrative posts." As a Jewish engineer from Lwów acknowledges, Jews occuppying such positions readily took advantage of them to misappropriate large quantities of state property for their private use.

This favoured status became a source of pride for many local Jews: "We were entirely happy to see Poles in their now lowly position. Our former rulers were brought down to size and humiliated." A Jewish refugee from Łódź conceded that Jews "often trifled with Poles in a very loathsome way and the expression 'your days are passed' was particularly abused."

While allowing Jews—who were very visible in the official propaganda apparatus and used their positions to the fullest—free range to publicly deride Poland and denigrate the Poles as cruel exploiters of the underprivileged classes, the Soviets punished perceived anti-Jewish slights with five years' imprisonment on the ground of spreading ethnic hatred. In some cities (e.g., Stryj, Kałusz), Poles were even forbidden to reside in certain areas. After being evicted from their homes, these were taken over by non-Poles.

CHAPTER TEN

Collaborators and Informers

Every town and village in Eastern Poland witnessed daily displays of collaboration, betrayal and denunciation. Each of these actions carried with them the potential of a death sentence for the fingered victim. In ***Włodzimierz Wołyński***, Janusz Bardach, the teenage son of an affluent and popular Jewish dentist (undaunted by his adverse experience with Soviet soldiers, he immersed himself in revolutionary activities and eventually rose to the rank of vice-chairman of the city election committee), recalls:

> The Soviet authorities organized a local militia and city council, filling the ranks with several of my [Jewish] friends who were members of the underground Communist Party. During the next several days I attended many political meetings and became a leader among young people who admired the Soviet Union. Badly wanting to be included in the avant-garde of the new society, I improvised passionate speeches and volunteered to be on committees. The Soviet authorities noticed my enthusiasm and invited me to many events, acknowledging me as a young leader.
>
> My parents tried to cool my enthusiasm, however, warning, me to stay away from politics and not to get so deeply involved with people I did not know and a system I did not understand ver well. I didn't argue with them but continued my activities, believing my dreams of social justice would be fulfilled now that our city was part of the Soviet Union. … I overlooked the fact that the new regime did not bring happiness to everyone in Wlodzimierz-Wolynski.
>
> But in my youthful zeal I did not pay much attention to how the Soviet authorities took over the town. … The Polish authorities and military personnel who had remained in town were arrested, along with clergy of all [Christian?] denominations. Many citizens, including my parents, condemned these actions, but to me they seemed logical and necessary; the clergy and Polish authorities had strong anti-Soviet and anti-Communist sentiments.
>
> I absorbed the indoctrination and devoured the propaganda. … I believed Stalin was mankind's great, progressive leader and that the social justice [sic] I had dreamed of for so long would be achieved by the new society.

Later, when this Soviet lackey married in the summer of 1940, typically he did so in a traditional Jewish ceremony: "But old Rabbi Meyer Finkelhorn had not been harmed and was still performing religious ceremonies in private homes. The wedding took place in the waiting room of my father's dental office. … We said our vows under the *hupa* in the middle of the room, and I stomped on the glass."

Polish sources confirm that Jews from that town actively denounced Poles to the NKVD.

> On the basis of denunciations authored by Communists and Jews targeted people were arrested immediately. In Włodzimierz they arrested the lawyer Albin Ważyński, Major [Julian Jan]

Pilczyński, the high school principal Leon Kisiel, the school inspector Mr. Jędryszka, and Strzelecki, the principal of one of the elementary schools. They were denounced by local Jews. They disappeared without a trace.

According to the memorial book of ***Rokitno,*** in Volhynia, a mixture of prewar Communists, Bundists and Jews with other affiliations rose to prominence. While there were denunciations against Betar Zionists (and likely others, especially Poles and those associated with the prewar Polish authorities), evidence of communal solidarity was strong, even among Communists.

[Baruch Shehori (Schwartzblat):] On 17 September 1939, several police and army officers left town. They were joined by tens of Polish families who were quite involved in public life. It was clear that changes were coming. Soon the news came that the Soviet army crossed the border and invaded Poland. A civilian police force was immediately organized. … most of its members were Jews. At 11:00 A.M., the first Soviet tanks entered town. The reception was enthusiastic. We received them with red flags and they greeted us with songs and blessings. …

Several young men had been imprisoned by the Polish authorities for their Communist activities. They suddenly rose to big positions. There were also Communist sympathizers or "Bund" members. They organized the municipal life and became Commissars. Their activities were not helpful to the Jewish population in town. Most of it consisted of storeowners and members of the middle class. …

[Yosef Gendelman, a prewar Communist, imprisoned by the Polish authorities:] As [the Soviet Army] entered the town, the prison doors of Kovel [Kowel] were opened and we were liberated.

I immediately returned to Rokitno. It was already in the hands of the Soviet army. On the strength of my rights as a veteran Communist and a loyalist to Communism, I became a member of the town council. From an economic point of view, as well as a municipal one, we did our best to prevent any wrong to be done to the Jews of Rokitno.

[Baruch Shehori (Schwartzblat):] Soon the Soviet regime was well established. Rokitno officially became the district capital. All the district offices of the present commissariats were quickly established. Many administrators arrived. …

The Soviet civil servants attracted all the activist residents and they were assisted by suspicious looking and unwanted elements. Even in the first days, several Polish social activists and some Jews were arrested and exiled. The first Jews to be arrested were the pharmacist Noah Soltzman and the teacher Mordechai Gendelman. They stayed in prison in Sarny for several months and were released after undergoing special treatment. The prisoners returned to town mute and it was impossible to get a word out of them.

Mr. Gendelman, the teacher, was active for many years for JNF [Jewish National Fund] and he was a distinguished Bible teacher at the Tarbut school. He turned completely and suddenly became a sworn Communist. He announced publicly in school that he felt contempt towards all Jewish

cultural values. He had previously taught these values to his pupils. He said they were only reactionary values. …

I served as principal of the Ukrainian high school. My main function was to gather all the school children and all the young people in a special evening course. In addition, I had to teach the population the principles of the Soviet constitution, to call frequent meetings and to do propaganda for Communism. It was a great responsibility.

We did not encounter any limits when it came to keeping religious values. The two synagogues were not closed. Services continued without any interruption.

[Yakov Schwartz:] Within a few days [after the Soviet invasion] the whole eastern part of Poland—or the western part of the Ukraine (so called by the Soviets) was conquered. The government began to establish itself. Veteran Communists, among them Jews from Rokitno who had been in Polish prisons for many years, were appointed to important municipal positions. The fancy clubhouse of the Polish officers was now available for the youth of Rokitno as a place to have fun.

They were drawn to it mainly out of curiosity. They were mostly Jewish youngsters. Some non-Jews came, but they did not really fit in and felt uncomfortable. …

The Zionist parties and the youth movements self-destructed. …

A local militia was formed to replace the Polish police. There were many Jews in it. In general, the Jews were prominent in all new government institutions. …

On the first day of Succoth, early in the morning, a soldier came to our house and asked my father to present himself to the military commander in town. Several hours later, when my father had not returned, we went to investigate what was happening. We saw four of our citizens: Shimon Klorfein, Mordechai Gendelman the teacher, Noah Soltzman and my father sitting on a truck. They were surrounded by armed soldiers. Another truck packed with soldiers, their guns cocked, followed them. It was a shocking sight.

We found out that after an inquest they were taken to Sarny. There they were held and interrogated for a month. A former P.K.P. [Polish Communist Party? The Communist Party did not recognize Polish rule over Eastern Poland, hence the regional organization was the Communist Party of Western Ukraine.—*M.P.*] man, a refugee thrown out of Eretz Israel, had accused them of Zionist and anti-Soviet activities. He decided to take revenge on the Zionists and found a convenient location when the Soviets entered Rokitno. …

After a month of investigations and interrogations, the detainees were released. It is important to emphasize the honesty of the Communists from Rokitno. When questioned by the investigators from the NKVD, they said that the detainees together with other residents had helped them and their families during the Polish regime. They provided them with lawyers and other assistance.

The first to be released was Mordechai Gendelman. It was at great personal cost and most humiliating. He was forced to sign a document promising to publicly announce that his work up to now was meant to delude innocent people and to show them the wrong way. The three others signed a promise to stop all Zionist activities and to be loyal to the Soviet regime.

[Shimon Klorfein, a Betar member:] When the Soviets occupied Rokitno we knew our dream of Aliyah had died. Still, a small group of members continued its activities underground until it was

> denounced by local Communists. Noah Soltzman, the teacher Mordechai Gendelman, Avraham Schwartz and I were jailed in Rokitno. This is how the Zionist movement in Rokitno, including Betar, was extinguished.

The profile of a Jewish denouncer in the small (largely Ukrainian) town of ***Świniuchy*** near Horochów, in Volhynia, as recounted by a fellow Jew from that town, is particularly intriguing:

> A man like this already had many people's blood on his hands. In the old days, during the Polish regime, he beat children and screamed in Polish, "Jews, go to Palestine." When the Russians came to the Ukraine in 1939, he was the first one to offer his services to the police, but because of his record as a teen-ager, his application was denied, so instead, he became the most nefarious informer in town. He was responsible for the death of many people. His activities inculcated the deepest hatred of Jews among Christians in Svyniukhy. When the Red Army left, he too was gone. The Germans captured him near Kiev. He registered as a Pole, as one who was exiled to Siberia by the Russians. He received a pass bearing a Polish name, but because of his arrant cowardice, he returned to his mother in the ghetto. In Lukacze [Łokacze] very few knew that Shlomo Giszes had come back; it had to be handled very quietly. If the Ukrainians learned about it, many in the ghetto would have suffered.

Samuel Manski, a Jew who had graduated in 1937 from a Catholic high school in ***Lida*** run by the Piarist Fathers, reported that he joined a Jewish militia shortly before the Soviet invasion and patrolled the streets of the town. He remained in the militia after the arrival of the Soviets and did their bidding, even to the point of arresting a former teacher, seemingly oblivious to the consequences of his actions. He wrote unabashedly about his conduct during that period, not as a Communist (which he wasn't), but from the vantage point of an ordinary young Jew:

> One day, while we were waiting for the Russians to occupy Lida, I went to the City Hall. To my surprise, I found a friend occupying the mayor's chair. He explained that, while a member of the left wing Zionist youth movement Hashomer Hatzier, he had also been a member of the Communist Party. The Communist Party was illegal in Poland. My friend had used the Hashomer as a cover. He asked if I would like to join the militia, and I did.
>
> People in the militia were given special privileges. Never did I have to wait in line for anything. This by itself made joining the militia worthwhile. People looked up to you; it was a good feeling. …
>
> When the Soviet forces entered Lida, I felt that a new life had began for us. … That freedom turned out to be short-lived. Zionism was designated as counterrevolutionary and forbidden. … the Russians did not know of my Zionist activities. I had earlier buried my Honoar Hatzioni flag …
>
> I remained in the militia under Russian supervision. For the moment, I was happy. As a militia member I had privileges and money, although there was little to buy. … One day I had the pleasure of escorting a former teacher of mine, a blatant anti-semite, to jail. Russian soldiers arrested him and I was told to accompany them. As we marched the prisoner through the streets of Lida to the

jail, I walked in front with my rifle and two Russian soldiers with bayonets behind him. What his fate was, I don't know.

The above account is complemented by one authored by a Pole, at that time the teenage son of the director of a Catholic printing house in Lida, and another authored by a young Jewish woman, the daughter of dentists whose social milieu was Polish (although culturally they considered themselves more Russian than Polish), who had also attended a Polish high school in that city but encountered no anti-Semitism:

I saw how the Jews welcomed the Red Army as it entered Lida on September 18, 1939. They were greeted with bread and salt. The town was full of red banners with Russian writing and portraits of Lenin and Stalin. Jews wore red armbands and neckerchiefs and held up their fists. This is an indication that they already had to prepare themselves before the war for this "welcome." Armed militia patrols composed of Jews from the proletariat began to circulate in the streets. The next day our printing house was seized and sealed.

We were evicted from our home on December 24th while we were eating our Christmas Eve dinner. Jews assisted in each of these activities and they were more high-handed than the Soviet NKVD. They looted what they could from our home. We became paupers and were taken in by some acquaintances (there were six of us in one room). My father couldn't obtain work. After a year my sister and I were employed in a Soviet (Jewish) printing house where Poles were discriminated against. They were given the worst jobs and Jews got the better ones. Besides, the entire management was composed exclusively of Jews.

In February 1941, one of the Jewish employees started a fight with me in which I hit back. In those days it was enough to say the word "Jew" in Polish rather than in Russian to get oneself arrested, let alone strike a Jew. The next morning four NKVD members were waiting to arrest me on the spot. The following day I faced a mockery of a trial in court. I was accused of being a counter-revolutionary, a spy and above all of being an anti-Semite. I was then seventeen years old. I was kept in the jail on May 3rd Street in Lida where I was subjected to severe interrogation and torture. Today I am an invalid. My torturers were all Jews. The local Jews were a lot worse than the Soviet ones. I shall give you one example of many. After being interrogated and beaten for many hours I was placed before a firing squad. A Jewish NKVD member aimed his revolver at me and screamed at me to sign a confession or else he would shoot me. He finally fired a shot. My nerves were shattered, and I lost consciousness and fell …

We arrived in Wolozyn [Wołożyn] hours after its occupation by the Soviet Army. Aunt Tanya was very much alone and she needed the family, and was very happy to see us. My parents and my aunts were educated in Russia and were brought up in the Russian culture. They felt much closer to the Russians than to the Poles. … We went to the street to greet the entering units. Aunt Liza was flirting with the officers. We settled for the time being, hoping to follow the army and to return to Lida. …

[In Lida:] The first weeks of the change of the government were confusing. Many [Jewish] teenagers and young men volunteered as militiamen. They wore red bands on their sleeves and

carried rifles. My cousin Edek was among them. Sometimes the weapon was in the hands of mentally deficient person. I have in mind a mentally retarded son of my piano teacher. He came up to our apartment very excited carrying the rifle. Mother talked him into giving her the weapon and she phoned his parents. Robert was sent to a mental institution near Wilno.

The communists in Lida were celebrating. They organized anti-capitalist demonstrations with long speeches. Most of the activists were Jews. There were some Bialorussian [sic] and Polish socialists. …

On February 29,1940 my father was arrested by the NKVD. We were having dinner when the doorbell rang. The maid Hela went to the door. She returned frightened, followed by 6 or more armed soldiers in NKVD uniforms. They ordered us to remain seated. Then they spread around to search the apartment. They told Hela that she is not a servant any longer, but a free citizen of the Soviet Republic. They did not realize that although Hela was a Bialorussian [sic], she was a Catholic and very much against the Russian occupation. Hela was smart enough to lead them away from our safe. They took the camera, the radio, and painting of Marshal Pilsudski sitting in the park in his favored vacation place, Druskieniki. They took also my father's photo portrait, in which he was wearing the medal of the silver cross. Father received the Silver Cross for outstanding service to the Polish government. He was always very proud of receiving it. The search ended. Father was ordered to dress and he was taken away. Hela and I began to cry. Mother, her face flushed, right away planned her next move. My sister Ella was not at home. Our mother was an exceptionally brave woman. The following day she went to the offices of NKVD. One of the officers was the husband of a dentist working with my parents in the Polyclinic. He told her that an interrogation would take place. We had no idea why he was to be questioned. It all became clear, when we joined father in the GULAG. There was a complaint signed by Jewish men, that father was a "socially dangerous element". Under pressure father agreed to a "TROIKA" verdict of GULAG for 5 years. One of the men who signed was a teenager from the orphanage in training in our dental laboratory. It was a charity case for the period of training and later he became an assistant to two senior dental mechanics, two brothers from the city of Dubno.

Another Jewish woman from Lida, who was deported to the Soviet interior in April 1940 together with her parents, recalled how members of the underground Communist Party rushed to the assistance of a horde of commissars who appeared on the scene and "felt like heroes and partners to the holy cause." But, to her chagrin, she also encountered ordinary Jews from affluent families like her own who had flocked to the cause. After her father's arrest by the NKVD in January 1940, she wrote a fateful letter to Stalin pleading for his release:

Evidently, it did not reach Moscow but wound up instead in the hands of the prosecutor in Lida. A few days later, I was summoned to his office.

The moment I stepped into the waiting room, I had an unpleasant surprise. … The receptionist was a girl I knew well, though we weren't exactly good friends. Her parents were well-to-do people whom I also knew well, and I had never suspected her of having Communist connections to the extent that she should become the prosecutor's receptionist. I suppressed my surprise and said a

> friendly "good morning." She didn't answer. How quickly she had learned their tactics! Her face was cold and hard, and only her big gray eyes smiled a triumphant smile, without shame, showing delight in my agony.
>
> She looked at the list on her desk and in a loud voice asked, "What is your name?"

Conspiratorial activities were severely hampered by Soviet infiltrators and local collaborators, mostly Jews. Even students came under the penetrating scrutiny of their Jewish colleagues. A group of female Polish high school students were denounced to the NKVD by their Jewish classmates who had prepared a list of suspected "subversives" among the Polish students in Lida. Jewish residents of that town confirm this state of affairs:

> Quite early some Jewish community leaders found their way to the authorities and the first who were hit were the Zionist youth movements and the Zionist movement in general. The pain was even greater when it became known that one of the informers was a pupil in the Tarbut school (a member of my sister's class).

> The young people who had before the war belonged to the Zionist organizations, with the arrival of the Bolsheviks, became dislodged from a strong stream on to the banks of a river. Suddenly they were torn out of their habits and ideas and thrown open to fear of arrest. The N.K.V.D. spread out a net of informers whose task it was to give the Zionist activists from before the war, into their hands. Everyone was afraid of his friend—maybe he is a traitor, and he will tell the N.K.V.D. what one did before the war.
>
> Mainly the ones who were terrified were those who had belonged to the Bais-R school and to the "Shomer HaTsair." The first were afraid of the Soviet followers, and the second those who had the nerve to espouse Marxist ideas.
>
> Day by day young people were arrested as well as older people. The families of those arrested didn't even know where they were. Fate laughed especially at the Communists, who had sat many years in the Polish jails [for their subversive activities—*M.P.*] … With the arrival of the Soviets they came out in freedom like martyrs. One looked at tem as heroes of the day. Not long did their popularity last. One by one they were once again taken from their beds at night and thrown into jail—but this time in the N.K.V.D.'s own prisons. …
>
> Very often we could see peddlers through the window of our house. One was a known N.K.V.D. informer. Before the war he belonged to HaShomer Hatzair, but he didn't inform on any of his friends.
>
> Several days after the happening with my sister, suddenly Nachum Zatsepitsky flew into our house and warned Molye and Berele that they were about to be arrested. He urged that they should flee quickly.

In ***Ejszyszki***, a small town south of Wilno which passed from Polish to Soviet hands in September 1939, and then to Lithuania at the end of October 1939 before reverting back to Soviet rule in June 1940, the

majority of administrative and state security positions were taken over by Jews. Yaffa Eliach, a Jewish historian from that town, describes the situation as follows:

> Under Soviet rule a regional revolutionary council known as the Revkum was established, which was responsible for Eishyshok and all the towns and villages in its vicinity. Headed by Hayyim Shuster, the Revkum began its program by attacking all the "reactionary" Zionist organizations and activities within the shtetl. Thus the Hebrew school was abolished and a Yiddish school for the children of the proletariat was opened; the speaking of Hebrew was forbidden; and the young people were pressed to join Communist rather than Zionist organizations. …
>
> The exiled shtetl Communists did not have to go very far either [after the Lithuanian takeover in October 1939], most of them settling in next-door Radun [Raduń] and other towns in Soviet Byelorussia. This group included Moshe Szulkin and his wife and children; Moshe's sister Elka Jankelewicz and her husband and children; Hirshke and Fruml Slepak, and Hayyim-Yoshke Szczuczynski. … Luba Ginunski, however, who had been asked to remain in Lithuania to keep the Communist flame burning (and also to supply information), spent most of her time traveling, in semi-hiding.
>
> On June 15, 1940, the Soviet army crossed the Lithuanian border. … This time around, during the second Soviet occupation, the local Jewish Communists—those who remained—had more of an opportunity to implement their Marxist ideology. Luba [Libke] Ginunski was the head of the local party, which included among its most active members Hayyim Shuster, his girlfriend Meitke Bielicki, Ruvke Boyarski di Bulbichke (the potato), [who headed the komsomol], Velvke Katz, and Pessah Cofnas. Among Luba's priorities was the redistribution of land and property. The estates of the great Polish magnate Seklutski [?] and those of other members of the Polish nobility were parceled out …
>
> According to Luba, most of the subsequent activities of the Communists in Eishyshok were implemented by the comitet—the local Communist governing committee—in her absence. … Rabbi Szymen Rozowski was thrown out of his spacious house, and the property of many of the most affluent members of the community was nationalized, their houses confiscated …

Unfortunately, like most Jewish authors, Eliach is preoccupied with the fate of the Jews and fails to notice the impact that the measures undertaken by local Jewish Communists had on the non-Jewish population. Local Jews even composed a popular rhyme encapsulating their communal sentiments toward their Polish neighbours:

> Szlachta do wywozu,
> chłopi do kołchozu.
>
> The gentry for deportation
> the peasants to the kolkhozes.

That Jews themselves feared, above all, fellow Jews is confirmed by many Jewish accounts. Joseph R.

Fiszman, a Jewish-American historian, writes:

> … in the midst of the very severe winter of 1939–1940, thousands of Jewish refugees [from the German zone]—entire yeshivas, those who were politically active and feared denunciation by [Jewish] communists they knew from back home, joined by Jewish businessmen from the Soviet occupied territories—attempted the trek to Wilno, crossing the heavily guarded new Soviet-Lithuanian frontier.

It is also worth noting that a local Zionist network, which smuggled Jews to the still independent Lithuania with the help of peasants on both sides of the border, was eventually betrayed to the Soviet authorities, as one Jew involved in the smuggling operation put it, by "our Communist brothers."

In ***Lida***, a centre for smuggling Jews into Lithuania,

> Even here were swarms of Yevsektsia [Jewish Section] and militia, doing their best to inform on us [i.e., the flight movement] to the authorities and cause arrests and sabotage to the maximum possible extent. … there were also not a few Yevsektsis in town, and (even) some traitors within the movement, who turned their coats and became enthusiastic Communists and collaborators with the Soviet Secret Police.
>
> We felt we were being traced and we received reliable information that the organizers of the Zionist Flight was being sought. Names, identification and descriptions of some of our members had been given to the detectives. …
>
> The frequent arrests of our people, the increase in border guards and the seizure of many groups inevitably resulted in a reduction in activity that still went on, despite everything, until the outbreak of the German-Russian war.

Historian Ben-Cion Pinchuk states, "To apprehend those fleeing and hiding, the NKVD used Jewish informers who were positioned in railway stations on the Polish-Lithuanian border, and in the streets of the major cities."

In ***Szczuczyn*** near Łomża, as in countless other communities, assistance to the Soviets on the part of the local Communists and their supporters, almost all of them Jews, was also indispensable. As a Jewish source describes,

> The Shtutsin [Szczuczyn] supporters of communism had after a short conference decided to greet the Red Army with flowers and music. … The civilian municipal committee had naturally adopted the right in-law—members of the Communist party.
>
> The following evening, one day after the Bolsheviks had seized power, they conducted arrests of Polish citizens. Arrested were: the former mayor Bilski, a few rich Poles from the intelligentsia, and all Polish landowners from around the city. They were sent to the Grayeve [Grajewo] and Lomza [Łomża] prison, later to Siberia.

> A few days later the Bolsheviks attended to the Jews, those from the so-called bourgeois class. Some of them were sent to Siberia. … The local communists had to approve which Jewish citizens could stay put and who must suffer exile 10 kilometers from the city.

In the nearby village of ***Radziłów,***

> Immediately there appeared in our town supporters, Communists of course, who were at their [i.e., the Soviets'] disposal. …
>
> The local flunkies … denounced us as ardent Zionist activists. … Then they arrested my husband for his Zionist activity. …
>
> We were always prepared for new harassment, mostly because of the persecution by the local Jewish devils, whom we avoided as much as possible. …
>
> There were many rogues, but they ran away [with the Soviets].

> In 1939, the Soviets arrested my husband [chairman of "Hechalutz"] and all the others whom I have mentioned above. After a short while, they freed all of them except Szlapak whom they tortured for three months, since the communists strongly accused him. Why? Shlichim [emissaries] used to come to us from Eretz Yisroel and they would speak to large numbers of Jews. They spoke in Shul and the [Jewish] communists [from the "Peretz Library"] would disrupt. Szlapak would bring the police. But we never said they were communists, only that they were disturbing the peace. They would be removed. Later, they took revenge on him, and accused him strongly.

Szmul Wasersztajn, a Jew from nearby ***Jedwabne***, traded in the countryside during the Soviet occupation. He bought livestock from local farmers, which he kept in the barn of a Polish acquaintance, and filled orders for meat. His biggest fear was falling into the hands of fellow Jews.

Michel (Mendel) Mielnicki, a Jew who hails from ***Wasilków,*** a small town near Białystok populated by Poles and Belorussians, presents a rather disingenuous portrait of his father Chaim, a newly recruited NKVD agent. He trivializes the impact of his father's vile deeds and obscures the true profile of his many victims. Tellingly, Chaim Mielnicki, had no prior Communist connections (he was an entrepreneur and his political leanings were Bundist), nor did he have "any particular enemies in the local Christian community, at least before the Russian occupation in 1939." (In fact he had a number of Christian friends with whom he associated.) Nor were there any reported excesses by the Christian population in September 1939 when the Germans first arrived in that area.

Despite his father's new position with the NKVD and Mendel's ardent involvement with the komsomol in his high school in Białystok, "It never occurred to me … that there was any contradiction in the fact that I was at the same time studying privately in preparation for my *bar mitzvah*." (The ceremony was conducted in a synagogue with his father present.) As director of a local cheese factory (his day job), Chaim Mielnicki reaped considerable material benefits for his family. His story, like many others, thus belies the claim that only a handful of committed ideologues who had cut off their ties with the Jewish community were involved in the "dirty work" which, as we know, targeted primarily the Poles in the early

part of the occupation. The lack of any trace of emotion or empathy on the part of the author in describing his Polish neighbours' fate is noteworthy.

> I don't know exactly how my father became involved with the NKVD (the forerunner of the KGB), the Soviet intelligence and internal-security agency. … I do remember, however, the NKVD commissars from Moscow, who would most often arrive at our house after dark, sitting in the living room, smoking one cigarette after another until they could barely see each other through the haze, talking in low voices with Father, as they went over their lists of suspected fifth columnists (so-called *Volksdeutscher* Poles), Polish fascists, ultranationalists, and other local "traitors" and "counter-revolutionaries."
>
> It was my understanding that he served as advisor to the NKVD about who among the local Poles was to be sent to Siberia, or otherwise dealt with. I don't think he had anything to do with the arrest of local Jews, or the expulsion of Jewish refugees who had flooded into the Bialystok area from the German-occupied provinces … Certainly, it is my firm belief that no one was ever murdered at my father's behest.
>
> Nevertheless, my mother was terribly upset by my father's collaboration with the Russian secret service. … I remember her begging him not to get involved. He disagreed. "We have to get rid of the fascists," he told her. "They deserve to go to Siberia. They are not good for the Jewish people." …
>
> Naturally, word of Father's clandestine activities got out. The black limousine that the commissars parked in our driveway when they came to visit was sufficient in itself to blow any cover he might have desired. Consequently, when the Germans invaded Russia in June 1941, the name of Chaim Mielnicki was on the hit list of both the local anti-Semites (who proved more numerous than anyone imagined) and their new-found allies [sic], the *Gestapo* … Because I was Chaim Mielnicki's son, I found myself the target of Polish bullets when I returned to Bialystok after the War. That's how much they came to hate him.

Of course, one didn't have to be a "fascist" to deplore Chaim Mielnicki's actions. Moreover, they were directed not at some alleged "fascists" but at ordinary patriotic Poles—neighbours of the Mielnickis who may have been politically or socially active in the interwar period and their families. (A classic case of blaming the victims!) That this gave rise to retaliations when the Soviets fled in June 1941 is not at all surprising—revenge is a *leitmotif* in Holocaust memoirs and Jews frequently took revenge on Christians who betrayed Jews to the Germans.

What is also noteworthy is that, in helping to deport his Polish neighbours, Mielnicki openly admitted that he did so *qua* Jew—"They are not good for the Jewish people." In this he undoubtedly embodied the sentiments of many Jews in that town. Some, like his wife, sensed that these specific actions, and not some pathological anti-Semitic syndrome on the part of Poles, would give rise to problems in the future. But what did ordinary Jews do or think when they saw respected members of their community turn into henchmen for the NKVD and prey on their Polish neighbours? Unfortunately, one encounters a defeaning and ominous silence about such matters.

In ***Kamieniec Litewski,***

> The situation of the Jewish population changed for the worst. The local Communists, like Leybke Katz, Leyzer Dolinsky, Joseph Wolfson, Joseph Kupchik, the two Jacobson brothers from Zastavye [Zastawie], Malca Radisch and other such "prominent party-members" hastily assumed posts of authority under the new rulers. They were familiar with everyone and they knew well how and whom to oppress and persecute.

In ***Brzeżany,***

> Tolek [Witold] Rapf remembered how "crowds of young Jews with red armbands and flowers in their hands greeted a Soviet tank … There were also a few Ukrainians among them, but no Poles, absolutely none." Tolek's sister Halszka recalled one of the Soviet propaganda meetings in the center of the town. "There were many Jews in the crowd. I remember some who threatened my father and myself with their fists, calling him a bourgeois capitalist. On another occasion a man with Semitic features stood on a balcony near the Ratusz [town hall], addressing a crowd in broken Polish. He told them that the time of the capitalists was over."

A Jew from ***Złoczów*** recalls:

> This developing picture did not seem to hamper the enthusiasm of our domestic Communists, who were determined to have their day. Some of them were known to us; others who revealed themselves as Communists took us by surprise, among the latter a colleague of ours, Mundek Werfel, son of a prominent Zionist. Some came out of the hideouts in which they were confined in the closing days of the war; others were released from prison; still others who had escaped east in anticipation of a German occupation now came back. The locals, particularly the "intellectuals," decided not to wait for the arrival of Soviet civilian authorities, and forged ahead with the nationalization of the larger businesses in town. As the second largest employer in town, our factory was a prime target. The very next day after the Russian army marched in, Jasio Hessel, the son of a lawyer and the brother of one of my best friends, accompanied by his cousin, Felo Rosenbaum, strutted into our apartment, handguns dangling from their belts. "In the name of the people," they rudely demanded the keys to the factory, mumbling something about putting an end to the exploitation of the workers. … After getting the keys, they left without a goodbye just as they had come in without a good morning.
>
> Other businesses in town were nationalized by the same or similar gangs within the first couple of days. …
>
> The rule of these self-appointed officials was very short-lived. A few days later the Russian civil authorities arrived. …
>
> Another few days passed when a car pulled in front of the house and two Russian officers and a woman got out. My father recognized the woman, Miss Czyzowicz, a pharmacist and an ardent Ukrainian nationalist. The elder of the two looked distinguished in his colonel's uniform and was obviously Jewish. His name was Leibkind. He said that he had been appointed head of the

Pharmaceutical Trust for the Lwow [Lwów] Oblast District … The other Russian, also Jewish, the *glavbuch* (head bookkeeper of the trust), said very little. …

Before the war, Zloczow's police force consisted of a commander, a noncommissioned officer, and about a dozen policemen. … Now we had a force of several hundred of the "people's militia," with a number of Russian captains, lieutenants, and noncommissioned officers. In addition there was the dreaded NKVD, some in uniforms, others in plain clothes, watching over our well-being. Informers also infiltrated into each factory and establishment. More militiamen were posted in adjacent villages and hamlets. In short, there were literally thousands watching our every move and listening to our every word.

The first wave of mass arrests came. Always at night. The starosta [county supervisor], the mayor, the judges, the police (except for those smart enough to have shed their uniforms and disappear). Many civil officials, prominent Zionists, and what scared us most, many people at random, whose arrests were a puzzle to us, were herded into cattle cars and deported deep inside Russia, to Siberia, to Kazakhstan and to other distant places. …

The factory had only a single member, Narayevski, who was also the secretary of the cell. To launch the Komsomol, the organizers brought the first members from outside the factory, who were appointed also the *normirovszczyk* and the *planowyk.* It was Nazimova who recruited two additional members from the factory, Chana Letzter and Milek Krumstick, a printer's apprentice. The two came from very poor Jewish families … Abronko did join … A few others, all Jews, followed him … A year later, the party enlisted its first Catholic, Miecio, a simple peasant boy … the other Catholic workers in the factory offered a Mass for Miecio's soul. This naturally got back to Comrade Nazimova and to the NKVD with some repercussions … However, the Mass incident halted further attempts to recruit more youngsters into the Komsomol. The Catholics would not join, and obviously the party felt that the Jewish quota was more than filled … a young Jewish woman from a middle-class family, a *gimnazjum* graduate, became the secretary of the Komsomol.

Conditions in the outlying villages were similar. In ***Gołogóry,*** near Złoczów, the NKVD constituted a village council (*selrada*) and a militia post consisting of Ukrainians and Jews, who promptly identified about 10 Poles who were arrested in early October 1939.

Israeli historian Ben-Cion Pinchuk provides the following synopsis:

The Soviet governing apparatus entered the provinces of Eastern Poland well prepared in its experience of rooting out enemies of the regime. The most active and sophisticated arm of the administration that came from the East was the security police, the NKVD. Within three or four weeks the NKVD had spread its net over the entire territory. It was a relatively easy task to locate and eliminate the first-line political leaders, those of them who did not escape into non-Soviet territories were apprehended in the first few weeks. But, in order to achieve the much broader aim of destroying the existing leadership infrastructure and undesirable elements of all kinds, the authorities had developed a refined search and control method. State, city and police archives were among the first institutions to be occupied and guarded by the new rulers. They were curious to discover the secrets guarded in the archives. Local collaborators translated from Polish and

> prepared detailed lists of suspects, to be used in the future. A fine net of informers was spread throughout the territories, in every institution, factory, enterprise and tenement. Local former Communists and new recruits were included among the informers. … local Jewish Communists played an important role in locating former political activists and compiling the lists of 'undesirables' and 'class enemies'. The NKVD tried, often with success, to recruit people who had previously been active in Jewish institutions and political organizations and thus created an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and fear among former friends and colleagues.

In addition to numerous Polish victims, as we have seen and will see, among these "friends and colleagues" were also a good number of fellow Jews.

Pinchuk, like other Jewish historians, however, exaggerates the role of the relatively few prewar Communists. Very many of the collaborators—and there was no shortage of them—were new converts to the cause or simply pro-Soviet, and not necessarily committed ideologues. Israeli historian Shalom Cholawsky points out that it was from the poorer classes, who had no formal ties to the Communist Party, that many of the volunteers for the people's militia came forward. According to Yitzhak Arad, in ***Święciany,*** north of Wilno, "There were also many Jews who had shifted ground and become enthusiastic Communists; for ideological reasons they were quick to inform the authorities of all Zionist activity." Arad states that Jews "constituted a fairly large proportion of those in local government and in the Communist party."

In Volhynia, according to a Jewish source,

> it was the Jewish communists who abolished the teaching of Hebrew and the Hebrew schools, in two months. The non-Jewish *politruks* (political commissars) did not even know that Hebrew was taught.

Denunciations assumed unheard of proportions. According to Dov Levin, the assistance of local collaborators who knew intimately the workings of their own community was indispensable. In addition to arresting kehillot leaders, members of town councils, and officials in now-outlawed political and party organizations, they also struck at Bundist and Zionist activists:

> The authorities, it transpired, had made preparations for these arrests and carried them out [in late 1939] with the help of local Communists, who had drawn up detailed lists of Zionist activists, public functionaries, and individuals who had relatives in Palestine.
>
> Whenever the security services thought the rosters of functionaries and public figures were incomplete, they consulted local Communists and sympathizers. There is no other way to explain how the security services were able to carry out arrests within a week or two of having reached the area. Moreover, the Zionists and socialists could not have been culled from the masses of refugees from western Poland on such a large scale without the assistance of Jewish Communists, who stalked them "like beasts of prey in the streets of Bialystok [Białystok], Luck [Łuck], Grodno, and

Kowel."

> Subsequently, after nearly all political activists in or around the previous regime had been uncovered, the security services had no further need of veteran Communists. Any information that they could not supply was provided by informers who reported everything going on in the here-and-now. Since the public was oblivious to the informers' relationship with the security services, the informers were both more efficient in their mission and more dangerous for their victims. They became even more menacing when the new regime settled in and spared no efforts to combine them into a permanent network.

Examples of Jews turning on fellow Jews abound. In ***Raduń***, a small town near Wilno,

> Yankele Stolnicki was a Jew from Radun who had been a young Communist leader. When the Russians occupied the city, he had been appointed secretary of the Communist Party, and in this post, had compiled lists of affluent Jews for the Russians. … many of these Jews were subsequently sent to Siberia, losing both their families and their wealth.

In ***Nowogródek***, "most" of the members of the militia that had formed spontaneously were Jews, who allegedly "belonged to the secret Communist Party." Denunciations were also a frequent occurrence. According to the daughter of one of the town's well-to-do Jewish families,

> Most prominent families in town were shipped off at night and not heard from again. Somebody "snitched" about Papa's Zionism and the NKVD called him in. I don't know how he bought his freedom but, for the moment, we were left alone.

Curiously, this didn't cause her to turn against or shun the denouncers from among the Jewish community, when after the German entry, in June 1941, a Polish friend

> had found many documents in the offices of the former NKVD—among them a list of informers … The list of informers … had, to my horror, many names I knew. There were many Jewish names, of course, and also the husband of our beautician. I let all the people listed know and advised them to hide or leave town. I begged Eddie and pleaded … to give me the list so we could destroy it once and for all.
>
> I warned him that, as a Pole, he would be next in line for persecution after the Jews. … If he weren't killed by the surviving Jews, he would be treated as a traitor by his own. [They ended up burning the list.]

A shopkeeper in ***Lida*** named Gad Zandman "had hidden some of his merchandise, including expensive fabrics, behind a double wall in his nationalized shop; someone informed on him, and he was sentenced to ten years in prison and expelled."

In ***Pohost Zahorodny*** (or ***Pohost Zahorodzki***) in Polesia,

> Zionist activities, along with other political and public agencies, were banned. Prominent activists were interned or exiled. David Bobrow, my oldest brother, was arrested for being a Revisionist leader. …
>
> … he'd risen to a high position under the Soviets. Someone got jealous and made up some lies about him. The Soviets would call it "denouncing" someone. So David ended up being put in jail by the Russians and freed by the Germans.

Józef Zeligman, a principal of a private high school in ***Białystok,*** was denounced to the NKVD by Władysław Tykociński, a former Jewish student of his, for having criticized the Soviet Union in a prewar article. Zeligman was arrested. His wife gathered materials critical of him published in the Polish nationalist press in the interwar period and used these to convince the regional chief of the NKVD that the damning references were not Zeligman's (in fact, they were). After the war Tykociński rose to the rank of colonel in the Polish army and "defected" from his post as Poland's military attaché in West Berlin.

Izhak Shumowitz, a successful manager of a bakery in the village of ***Czerwony Bór*** near Zambrów, was informed that someone had informed on him to the NKVD and that he faced deportation. A friendly official was able to find out that the informer was "none other than the Jew who acted as manager of the local store. A further informer turned out to be the wagon driver who worked for this man." Billeted in his home was an officer named Boris, who turned out to be a Jew: "he was active in some secret department, where his assignment was to denounce officers who had set up gas stations in the region." Shumowitz also traces the fortunes of some local Jewish Communists through the Soviet and German occupations, and then in Stalinist Poland:

> One of fellow citizens who lived nearby was a shoemaker, with many close connections with the villagers in the region. He had three young nephews in Zambrov [Zambrów] who used to visit him from time to time. In the past, these men had been fervent communists, active and gifted. In the days of the Soviet regime, one of them was appointed Commissar of the Zambrov province. When the Germans arrived in Zambrov, these young men fled to their uncle in Chervony Bur [Czerwony Bór], who managed to find shelter for his nephews, each in a different place. …
>
> This was a very moving meeting for me, for we met with no less than the three Stupnick brothers, with whom we had started collecting arms, and dreamt of forming a group that would fight for its existence. …
>
> Each member of the group was armed with a gun supplied by the Stupnick brothers. …
>
> The Stupnicks were in the habit of going to the pigpens of the villagers, and stealing some of the animals. They had worked out their won methods of overcoming the animals and silencing them during this operation. That night, we joined them in their operations, and we returned to the bunker at Gosk's farm with a load of meat and other food supplies. …
>
> Our stay here [in Zambrów] was naturally of a temporary nature, our sights were set for Israel. Perhaps that is the reason why I was furious when I heard that the Stupnick brothers had returned to their communist activities. We thought of Communism and Nazism as similar evils, and even

> though the divide between them was great, the Soviets were in no small degree responsible for our sufferings. It was difficult to come to terms with those who try to overlook, or to forget this chapter of history.

In ***Grodno***, after witnessing executions and denunciations of Poles and bullying and harassing of Polish children at school—all at the hands of local Jews—an obliging Polish family was implored by a Jewish shopkeeper to conceal her goods from the plague of local Jewish informers whom she and other Jews feared. She bemoaned the behaviour of her fellow Jews who preyed on their own people and praised the Poles for their communal solidarity in the face of the Soviet occupants. Another Jewish woman blamed the Jewish pro-Communist riff-raff for denouncing her husband, a small shopkeeper, who was arrested and mistreated as a result.

In ***Pińsk,***

> The local fifth column helped draw up a list of the "leisure elements," which included storekeepers, furniture dealers, lawyers, merchants—hundreds and hundreds of people in all. All these Jews were expelled from the cities and sent out into the little towns or the countryside, where nobody knew them and they lived as shelterless refugees.

Two Jews from ***Lwów*** described their family's experiences as follows:

> With both parents working, we thought that we had now become legitimate members of the "working class". Until one night …
>
> They came after midnight, both wearing NKVD uniforms. … One was big, fat, blond and looked like a pig. His name was Brasilovsky. The other was small, thin, dark, and looked like a rat. His name was Bornstein. Both were arrogant and threatening, particularly when my mother dared to ask an occasional question. Of course, her questions were never answered. They came to search. They looked into all our closets and lockers, into every drawer. I do not know what they found and what they took. My parents never discussed this with me. The search lasted a couple of hours. At the end they informed my father that he was under arrest and told him to dress. Then he was led away. My mother was frightened to death and so was I. The collapse of our empire was now complete.
>
> The next day my mother was notified that we would all be exiled to Siberia, unless we paid a "contribution" of one kilogram of gold coins to the Soviet government. The money had to be paid within 24 hours. Somehow mother made the necessary arrangements and 1 kg of US$ 20 coins was provided on time. The next day my father was released. He returned home without a smile and never told me what happened to him during those two days. Whatever my mother knew, she kept to herself. As we later found out, the "contribution" went straight into the pockets of Brasilovsky and Bornstein. A short time later their scam of searching homes of wealthy people and extorting "contributions" was uncovered and they were arrested. During their trial my father was subpoenaed as a witness. After answering questions, he was told that the gold would be returned. 57 years later I am still waiting for the fulfillment of that promise.

… Seeing my father being led away by a pig and a rat, both in NKVD uniforms, left indelible marks on my way of thinking. It immensely influenced my philosophy of life, and to a large extent my later political allegiances. I became permanently distrustful of the Soviet Union and of everything that smelled of communism.

September 17: In Lwów there was a great shock, because the war was with the Germans, but it was the Soviet army that marched into Lwów. From a window in our skyscraper, we watched how crowds of people greeted the Bolsheviks. …

This was the first blow for our family, because the Bolsheviks mainly looked for factory owners, bankers, and other rich people. [In fact their first target were Polish state officials and military officers.—*Ed.*] We were at the top of the list for deportation to Siberia. We thus thought about going into hiding. We had to watch out for certain Jewish neighbors whom we knew to be Communists. …

For a few days there was dead silence. One day my sister and I were in Hotel George, across the street from our skyscraper, because all sorts of valuables there were being packed up. When we went out of the hotel with our uncle, we saw that there were two Russian cars and a large army truck in front of our house. Uncle tried to convince us that we should wait on the street until they went away or go back to the hotel, but we insisted that we wanted to go to Mama and Papa. It turned out that the house was full of guests. There were high-ranking Russian officers, and we later found out they were Bolshevik NKVD [Soviet Secret Police]. We did not sense any fear at home; Mama was lively, and the officers were very courteous. This whole crowd was brought to us by a Communist named Ari Zusman, who came from a poor Jewish family and not so long before was still selling lemonade at the market.

Mama was delighted when we arrived. There was plenty of food and wine on the table, and Zusman behaved as if he were in his own home. We were told that we were in no danger and that although the Soviet government would take over our properties, Papa would still remain in charge. The feat lasted until late into the night. Nobody believed Zusman, and the family decided to escape, as far from Lwów as possible.

I remember, as if it were today, that very late at night in November 1939, the NKVD came to our house accompanied by several Jews we knew (because formerly, they had been our employees), dressed in Russian uniforms. These Jews were very aggressive. My mama was very beautiful, and as I recall from a subsequent conversation between my grandparents, two of these Jews with the NKVD wanted to rape her. An officer calmed them down.

They demanded that the documentation for the factories, hotels, movie theatres, and other property be turned over to them. … The Russian officer told them not to touch anything. An argument ensued; the officer told them he was in charge and took out his pistol. The situation became dangerous. He put them at attention and told them to get out.

The house was filled with fear. The officer received all the documents; he even made out a receipt and said, “Now, my host, give us some vodka.” … There were three of them, and they even sent for those who had been told to get out. They ate and drank their fill, and each got several bottles of Baczewski vodka and plenty of food for the road. But these Jews who had worked for us and were now in Russian uniforms in drunken condition insisted that the NKVD officer take us this very day

> to prison. Once again it nearly ended in shooting. In the end, the officer telephoned military headquarters, which quickly sent some people who handcuffed those four Jews collaborating with the NKVD and took them away in their car.

Jacob Celemenski, a Bundist activist from central Poland who took refuge in Lwów, recalled:

> The first arrests among Bund activists had already been made, among them Lwow [Lwów] Bund leaders Dr Karl Ainoigler and Emanuel Szerer … Comrade [Shoel] Gezunt, [veteran Lwów Tailors' Union chairman], advised me not to look for tailoring work at the union hall because I was known there and could be pointed out. I would do best to disappear from Lwow altogether, as it was teeming with Bolshevik informers. The advice sounded right, and I listened.
>
> I knew Vilno [Wilno] would not be overlooked or spared for long, just as I knew that staying around Lwow, meant certain arrest. I decided to return to Krakow [Kraków].

A Jew associated with the Korkis Technical High School, a Jewish school in Lwów, recalled:

> In September [1939] school started. The Soviets had made some changes, the most obvious one was that they had sent Badian [the school's director] and his family to Siberia and had elevated Horaztzy Horowitz. Apparently a Korkis staff member, nobody knew exactly who it was, had denounced Badian as a reactionary. The fact that he had been a Czarist officer sealed his fate. …
>
> Although the Russians changed directors, they didn't change the make-up of Korkis' students. The school had always been for Jewish students and it stayed that way, but they eliminated the Jewish part of the curriculum.

Connections also assisted those who might otherwise face deportations to avoid their fate, as a resident of ***Wiszniew*** elucidates:

> So what did the Jews do? They used all their connections and resorted to cronyism to join the poor class, which was really the most privileged class under the Soviet rule. One day, a second committee came, sent by the NKVD to clean the population of all unwanted elements, meaning anti-Soviet elements. First, they deported all the Asdoniks [*osadnik,* plural *osadnicy*]; they were the Polish settlers from the old veterans of Polish legionnaires who had received land from the Polish government as a reward for their service. After that came all the people who were suspected as anti-Communists; these were mostly from the village's Christian population. Their "crime" got them sent to prison and later to Siberia. A few of the Jews also suffered. Three Jews who were suspected ant-Communists (Zeev Davidson, Yishaiau Rubin, and Mordechai Zallak) were arrested and sent to Siberia—first them alone, and shortly after also their family members.

A similar situation prevailed in ***Bereza Kartuska***, in Polesia:

> Past Polish officials and landowners were expelled to Siberia. They also wanted to expel Jews that had big businesses in the past, but the Jewish communists implored them and achieved the annulment of this cruel ordinance by claiming that they now were poor and not rich people, and their debts had grown very large.

Indeed relatively few native Jewish residents of Eastern Poland suffered expulsion to the Gulag. As noted earlier, most of the Jewish deportees were refugees from the German zone. Moreover, few Poles lacked the resources or connections to have escaped their fate.

In ***Brańsk*** near Bielsk Podlaski, where Jews came out in throngs to welcome the Soviet invaders, attitudes changed overnight. A Pole who greeted a former Jewish classmate on the street got a blunt response in Russian: "Kiss my ass." Many local Jews entered the Red militia and most of the official positions were handed over to Jews and to some people brought in from the Soviet Union:

> … the communist-leaning Jewish poor and youth were in their element. They eagerly joined in implementing the new order. Alter Trus, a Jewish chronicler, described a great many abuses committed by Jewish communists on fellow Jews. Jews also took up responsible positions in the town administration closed to Poles. Half of the Red militia was composed of communists who had come from the East; the other half were local Jews. … The attitude of the majority of Jews toward the Poles worsened considerably, and the Poles viewed very critically the close cooperation of the Jews with the Soviets.
>
> Almost all managerial positions in the city were staffed by local Jews or newly arrived Belorussians and Russians.
>
> At the end of October and in November 1939, a wide-scale campaign of nationalization and collectivization of private, state, and cooperative property was conducted. One of the local Jews, Alter Trus, wrote a description of those events: "A new privileged class emerged. Store owners were regarded as the bourgeoisie that had to be destroyed. Welwl Pulszański, Benie Fajwel Szustels, Ryfcie Pytlak, all old communists, become most important persons in the city. They were joined by Szepsel Preiser and Chaje Man. They occupied themselves with nationalizing [expropriating] Brańsk's bourgeoisie." Examples of abuses committed during the execution of official duties by overzealous and not too honest officials, mainly of Jewish and Belorussian origin, are provided by Trus. The actions of these persons were characterized by duplicity. Hiding behind their lofty goals and the broader social good, "they [took] goods from stores, [looked] for money and for valuables which they [stuffed] into their pockets. This is their payment for nationalization. A souvenir has to remain. They [hid] the better goods among their acquaintances in order to sell them later. This is what Welwl Pulszański and his wife were doing in the stores belonging to Elko Gotlib and the son of Lejzer Rubin. Szepsel Preiser and Chaje Man were doing the same in Motl Konopiaty's shop. Konopiaty protested that he was not subject to nationalization. When the case was cleared and the goods had to be returned, it turned out that they had vanished. Whoever was on

good terms with Szepsel Preiser and Pulszański had nothing to worry about." These examples are good illustrations of how the principles of the new political system were introduced.

> The new official apparatus treated all Poles as potential enemies. They endeavored to sovietize people susceptible to communist ideas and to liquidate patriots. This situation had a very strong influence on shaping moods among Poles and among that part of the Jewish population which did not collaborate with the occupants. Propaganda posters about Soviet-German friendship provoked additional repugnance. The NKVD created a network of confidants. … Through denunciations and anonymous letters to the NKVD and the Communist Party, some people began to settle old scores. This suited the occupants. At that time one Soviet soldier stated, not without some reason, that the biggest danger for the inhabitants of Brańsk was themselves.

The fact that there was a power shift in some towns and that local Communists were replaced by those imported from the East did not signify that the local Communists' utility was spent. In ***Dawidgródek,*** according to a Jewish source,

> The town authority was in the hands of local Communist activists. The Soviets allowed them to run things for the first few months. About 6–7 Jewish and 3–4 Christian [Belorussian] Communist activists dominated the town during the course of those first months. These few Communist activists inscribed a sad chapter in the history of the town, on the one hand because they denounced to the NKVD (Soviet security organization) the majority of Zionist workers in town, leading to the subsequent arrest of these people. And on the other hand they incited the majority of the *Horodtchukas* [Belorussians] against the entire Jewish population. …
>
> Gradually … All the local Communist activists who had run the town until then were replaced by imported Soviet citizens. The town president, the police chief, the leaders of the various economic, cultural and social institutions were all replaced by *vastatchnikas* [Easterners]. Also, the other more-or-less responsible posts were occupied by Soviet citizens. The local Communist heretofore-town leaders were then employed in second-rank posts, and were used by the NKVD to give information about each and every inhabitant. These local Communist activists willingly took on this "honorable" mission, transforming themselves into simple informers, devising false accusations against their victims. […]
>
> The mood of the Jews was very depressed. They understood that the NKVD used not only the local Communist activists but also other disguised local agents and informants who gave them information concerning every single town inhabitant. In reality there were those in the town, including also upstanding and elderly Jews, who worked along with the NKVD, giving them information and carrying out their assignments. […] There were among the informers people of various ages, political hues and social strata.

Although this source notes that "Polish officials and colonists were removed along with their families, close friends and relatives," no details are provided as to how the Soviets were able to swiftly identify and to carry out the arrest and deportation of that targeted minority.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude, as some Jewish historians do, that the growing ranks of Jewish Communists and their willing helpers were either revolutionaries or hailed from the poor or socially marginalized elements, and that they had divorced themselves from their community and relinquished any ties with and solidarity for fellow Jews. As copious examples illustrate, many of them were not committed ideologues but simply pro-Communist or pro-Soviet. Moreover, they hailed from all social strata, often shifted their political allegiance, and enjoyed popular support in their communities. Jewish Communists were known to promote the use of Yiddish and Hebrew in state schools, and most of the prewar Jewish principals and teachers were allowed to keep their positions, provided they accepted the educational tenets of the new regime. A substantial portion of Jewish Communists circumcized their sons and had them bar mitzvaed and weddings as prescribed by religious law were commonplace. Moreover, there is ample evidence Jewish Communists often favoured and protected their own, especially in the smaller localities.

A Jew from ***Skała Podolska*** turned to his friend's brother to obtain permission to transport a large quantity of food, which was strictly forbidden and severely punished under laws against smuggling.

> Hersz Schwartzbach, my friend's brother and the erstwhile pro-communist spiritual leader of the local "Ha-Shomer ha-Tzair," had become an important personage in the local administration.
>
> He was now a trusted adviser to the Soviet occupation forces. I knew that neither my family in Tarnopol nor my friends waiting for me in Lwów had any way of obtaining sufficient foodstuffs. So I decided to pay a call on Schwartzbach. The worst he could do was say no; I trusted him not to imprison me. In fact, he greeted me with open arms. He was worried about his brother Szymon, who was in besieged Warsaw. … I kept hesitating to come out with my request, since I could sense the esteem in which the Ukrainians and Russians there held him. But he himself inquired about my fate and asked if he could help. I explained things and he agreed. The current regulations were aimed only at speculators and black marketers. He knew I was no speculator. All he had to do was draw up a document. He summoned the party secretary.
>
> Now Schwartzbach asked questions and I answered. He stressed the fact that I was an orphan while omitting any mention of my relatives in Skała or their property holdings. … Everything went smoothly after that. I received the required permit. Sarka and Zysio packed bags and crates and helped me load it all on the train.

According to Jewish source, in ***Łuck***, in Volhynia,

> When the Soviets entered Łuck, the Jewish Communists started to collaborate with them immediately. The Folkists and Bundists also became at once great supporters of the new Soviet masters. …
>
> Before the war there lived in Łuck an important Communist activist, Menachem Librich. He came from a wealthy home; likewise his wife Donia Blumenkranc was also the daughter of wealthy Hasidic parents. When the Soviets entered the city, Menachem Librich became the interim chairman of the gorsoviet [town council]. He was not ill-disposed toward the wealthy prewar Jews. …

> On New Year's eve 1940–40 I was stopped by the NKVD because a Jewish policeman who worked for the Soviets, Jankl Knepl … wanted to take my passport. I didn't want to hand it over so in the ensuing struggle the passport was torn. I was arrested for destroying a Soviet passport. The NKVD accused me of being a counter-revolutionary and the son of a bourgeois. My brother, who was a doctor in Łuck, intervened wherever he could and I was eventually released. But the real reason for my release was thanks to Gerszonowicz, the secretary of the local section of the Communist Party, who was a Jew from Kiev.

In ***Horochów,*** in Volhynia,

> Although we of the younger generation were Zionists, we did not suffer under the new regime, and this fact is to the credit of the Jewish Communists in our town, who did not take revenge or inform on the rich, the merchants or the Zionists as Jewish Communists in other places had done. After some time nearly all my friends, even those whose families had been rich, received jobs. Most of us worked as teachers. The "Tarbut" Hebrew School became a government institution with Yiddish as the language of instruction. Simcha Perlmutter was the director and among the teachers were: Naomi Hevel, my relative, Yisrael Goldfarb, Herschel Bierfeld and others. I taught in the High School with Niomka Fisch, Raizel Blechmann and others. I also began to study at Lvov [Lwów] University at this period. One had to get used to new times, new people, new habits and new demands. We, as Jews, knew how to adapt ourselves to new conditions and it was not long before we settled down to our work.

A witness from the predominantly Jewish town of ***Warkowicze*** near Dubno, in Volhynia, where the Red Army was also "warmly received," recalls:

> They began by harassing the "rich Jews" (merchants) and anybody known to be a Zionist, threatening them with exile to Siberia. … Then Warkowicze's own communist, Israel Keitel, came home from Kartus Bereza [Bereza Kartuska], a Polish jail for political prisoners, where he had been interned for years (he had naturally been released by the Russians). He intervened with the Soviet authorities on our behalf, and as a result, no Jew was sent away from Warkowicze to Siberia.
>
> Still everyone had to register for work, and we Goldbergs were in some difficulties over how to conceal our status. … I decided to pass myself off as a notary's clerk. In my work at the *biuro*, I often had to go to the notary's office in Rovno [Równe] … and I had become very friendly with Shumski, the assistant notary. Now I contacted him, and though he was a Ukrainian, he agreed to back up my story. We went to register together.
>
> In the forms that we were given to fill out, Shumski wrote down that he was an assistant notary. I wrote down that I was a clerk for a notary. The Russian official read through our forms and then looked us over.
>
> "Why is he an assistant and you only a clerk?" he asked me.
>
> I thought fast. "Because the Poles are so anti-Semitic," I replied quickly. "They would never give a high position to a Jew."

"So," the official said. "From now on, he will remain the assistant, and you will be the notary."

I could hardly believe my good luck. For once, being a Jew turned out to be an advantage. …

Shumski and I began work a day or two later in the notary office in Rovno. … I must have done well, because after I'd been a notary for two months, a senior official arrived from Kiev and made me the *starshii notarius* (chief notary) for all of Volhynia. There were fourteen people working under me at my own office, and I was in charge of twenty-four other notaries throughout the region.

The following accounts from the town of ***Łanowce*** near Krzemieniec, in Volhynia, also attest to solidarity among Jews, including Communists, towards their community:

The Lanowitz [Łanowce] Jews deserve praise for the fact that no betrayal occurred. Their solidarity held. I, the daughter of a "reactionary" was found fit for the job of head secretary at the Municipality. I was recommended for the job by the local party secretary who liked me. Other Jews were also chosen for key posts in the town administration. These functionaries considered the saving of Jewish residents from arrest and deportation as one of the important administrative tasks.

I was working for Yunek Farber in his egg warehouse when the Soviets marched into Lanowitz in 1939. I was considered as a "kosher" proletarian. As the Soviets reorganized the municipal administration, I was considered "close" to the regime. The Soviet administration organized a new Police force, consisting of Ukrainians and Jews. Berchik, Hirsch-Ber and I, were selected as Police commanders. My task was to observe all that went on in our town. The task was an unpleasant one because the Soviet administration viewed the Lanowitz residents as a "suspect element".

Fortunately, none of the propertied Jews were either arrested or deported to Siberia. This was partly the result of our efforts to prevent this from happening. While we tried to protect local Jews, we could not prevent confiscation of private property altogether. As the Soviet Politruks (managers) became established locally, they proceeded to nationalize significant private property. ...

The new administration permitted the local retailers to trade as in the past. …

The youths of Lanowitz, Zionist in their orientation, fluent in Hebrew and steeped in its literature, had to stop all their Zionist activities. They joined the Communist Youth organization to assure their political safety. …

Jews continued to pray in their synagogues. In fact, they spent many hours in public prayer …

A few of us got married. Those about to marry would hire a Rabbi secretly, yet for political safety register their intent to wed with the city registrar. These young couples viewed civil marriage registration as a plague that cannot be avoided. Having a wedding ceremony performed by a Rabbi was still considered by our youths as their primary social obligation. … Moshe Kerner married a teacher from Yampil [Jampol] who was a die-hard communist. The couple only registered their marriage with the local civil authorities. When their first son was born, they had him properly circumcised. Our mayor, Yizhak Shmokh, foud it necessary on this occasion to dismiss the mother from the party.

A Jew from ***Stryj*** recalled:

> Before leaving the city [in June 1941] the Soviet authorities took a parting shot at several residents who were suspected of Zionism, including ordinary residents who were perfectly innocent. They were taken out of their beds at midnight and carried away to Siberia. … An acquaintance of mine in the N.K.V.D. told my wife that my name was also on the list of candidates for Siberia. If I had not hidden with a Polish family I would also have been taken away.

Both Aleksander and Maria Kahn of ***Borysław*** received separate warnings from fellow Jews of their impending arrest and fled to Lwów, taking their children with them.

A Jew from ***Przemyśl*** recalled the warning her father had received:

> There was a Jewish lady who was the secretary of the Communist Party in Przemyśl. She was the daughter of a friend of my father. This lady tried to warn my father because he tried to run the *yeshiva* underground. The Russians were deporting people they considered undesirable to Siberia.

Another Jew from that town described how his father's communal ties assisted him in getting a reprieve.

> After about a year the Russians found out that we were wealthy, which was a crime at that time. We were sentenced to ten years in Siberia. Since my father had connections in the NKVD (later KGB), he bribed them for an extension of six months to salvage some goods that were in the warehouse.
>
> Before our time was up, in 1941, once again the German Army attacked. This time they attacked the Russians.

A Jewish woman from ***Kołomyja*** recalled the assistance she sought for a Jew who had registered to return to the German zone:

> The refugees were young and middle-aged men (few with families) who had fled eastward during the first days of the German invasion of Poland. Many had tried to escape being drafted into the Polish army, and many had run to avoid the Nazi occupation. All found themselves in the Soviet zone of Poland and many remained homeless and jobless. Most were heartbroken about the fate of families left behind in the west. Believing the Soviet reassurances, they "registered" and made themselves ready for transport. As soon as I learned that Romek had registered, I convinced him go into hiding. No sooner did he follow my pleading than a "guest" visited, asking for Romek and his whereabouts. This "guest" was an old friend of my husband's who had himself been a political prisoner. We were horrified that a person with his experience of injustice would allow himself to be used in a police role. He was embarrassed in front of us, and he left, assuring me that "all will blow over in a few days." All those who had registered were rounded up the next morning. …

> A few months later, Romek, along with many other young men, was called up for the draft. Again, I was petrified that he would end up in the Soviet army and that I would lose him. So once again I used all of the contacts my husband and I could find, and I was able to "save" him.

A Jew who served under the chief of the militia, also a Jew, in ***Stojanów*** recalls:

> [Chief] Kashinsky placed me in the criminology department, as an interpreter, questioning people and informers. Kashinsky used to tell me when they were going to search someone's property. I would then go home and tell my brothers, who would then run to warn the people. This went on for over two months. Kashinsky knew I was doing this. He didn't want to hurt people, but he was forced [sic] to conduct these searches. I was able to warn one [Jewish] man who had a lot of hardware hidden because he had been in the hardware business; and I warned another [Jewish] man who had stashed away shoes from his shoe business.

But this "interpreter" with a heart of gold was no slouch. He was soon sent to the criminology school in Lwów and, in his words, "I was the first member of *Komsomol* from the eastern part of occupied Poland. I became a real Communist." His father became the agricultural inspector and head of a cooperative.

> I was really a big shot. When I left the criminology school, I was already a full lieutenant. … I was in charge of spies working on both sides of the border. I must have done a tremendous job because I was advanced so quickly.

Among the committed Jewish Communists, especially those who had fled to the Soviet zone in September 1939, denunciations became a way of life. Józef Światło (Izak Fleischfarb), a postwar colonel of the notorious Tenth Department in the Ministry of Public Security who defected to the United States in 1953, provided the following damning testimony about the activities of his fellow Jewish communists in ***Lwów***:

> [Luna or Julia Brystygier] started her career in Lwów, at the time of the entry of the Soviet army in 1939. As the former wife of Dr. Nathan Brystygier, a Zionist activist in the pre-war period, Luna had all the required contacts and connections. Immediately after the arrival of the Red Army in Lwow in 1939 Brystygier started denouncing people on such a scale that she antagonized even some Communist Party members. That was the beginning of her feud with Colonel [Józef] Rozanski [Różański, actually Goldberg], now the director of the investigation department of the "Bezpieka" [Security] political police. At that time, Rozanski and [Jerzy] Borejsza (Rozanski's brother) competed in denouncing people to the N.K.V.D. (now known as the K.G.B.). There was sharp rivalry between them in that area. Eager to win, Brystygier wrote to the N.K.V.D. a report accusing Rozanski of being a member of a Zionist family. It was true that his father, Dr. Goldberg, was before the war editor of the Zionist newspaper "Haynt." Rozanski knew about that report and I

> recall him complaining: "Just think, comrade, that … squealed on me! But comrade Luna forgets that I have had a longer career in the N.K.V.D. than she." …
>
> After the entry of the Red Army in Lwow Brystygier conducted her activity as an informer by organizing the so-called Committee for Political Prisoners. That committee was instrumental in helping the N.K.V.D. to capture party deviants and that was how Brystygier finished off some of the comrades. She has now a very strong position at the "Bezpieka" headquarters.

Betrayals of fellow Communists became the order of the day. A writer by the name of Stanisław Sulikowski (Zalcman), who worked for the Communist newspaper *Czerwony Sztandar* in Lwów, was turned in by his fellow journalists. The same was true in ***Białystok*** where, according to a Jewish source,

> Finger-pointing began to proliferate, sometimes behind closed doors, sometimes in public. In a literary gathering in Bialystok … one of the Warsaw writers began to gesture in the direction of several of his Polish colleagues, saying: "This one's a Zionist," "This one's a Bundist," and so forth. … Refugee writers … joked about colleagues from Warsaw and Lodz [Łódź] who had rushed to "paint themselves red" and churn out enthusiastic reportage and features in the local newspaper, "as if their forefathers had been Communists from time immemorial."

Some Jewish Communists had checkered careers with interludes with the Gestapo. Izydor Reisler, who under the assumed name of Jerzy Sawicki was an influential figure on the Lawyers' Council in Soviet Lwów and persecuted its Polish members, turned agent for the Gestapo in the Lwów ghetto. This did not prevent him from rising to the position of prosecutor at the Supreme National Tribunal and Supreme Court in Stalinist Poland. Another example of a Jew who served many masters was described by Stanisław Taubenschlag, a scion of a prominent Jewish family from Kraków and son of Professor Rafał Taubenschlag, dean of the Jagellonian University. Stanisław Taubenschlag was pursued by Danek Redlich, the son of a Jewish official in Kraków, who denounced him to the Gestapo while on a mission for the Polish underground in Warsaw. Taubenschlag managed to extricate himself and survived this trap, but his pursuer was now a wanted man.

> The news of my tribulations in Warsaw quickly spread in the circles of young people. The hunt was now on for Danek Redlich who, it transpired, had been in the employ of the Bolsheviks in Lvov [Lwów] and had betrayed several people there. When Lvov was occupied by the Germans, this professional agent, entered the service of the Gestapo. After the war he worked in the security service (UB). In the 1950s he went to Venezuela where he met his death in a car accident in Caracas.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Victims of Choice

Although the fact that Jewish Communists also wronged fellow Jews may be relevant for settling internal (intra-Jewish) accounts, it is an irrelevant or, at best, a marginal consideration in terms of Jewish relations vis-à-vis Poles, especially since these Jewish Communists, with very few exceptions, lost no time reintegrating themselves into the Jewish community once their love affair with the Soviets ceased. Yaffa Eliach describes the fate of the Communist collaborators from the small town of Ejszyszki, populated by some 3,000 Jews, as follows:

> there were about fifty Communists operating clandestinely in Eishyshok during this period, about forty of whom were Jewish. Many of them were highly committed political activists …
>
> The Communists considered the government of Poland their enemy, and made violent attacks on the Polish police. When members of Beitar assisted the Polish police on market day during the mid-1930s, the Communists sometimes fought with them, too. …
>
> The majority of the shtetl Communists survived the Holocaust, having either fled to the Soviet Union or been exiled there by the time the Germans arrived. In a stunning reversal, they who had once denounced Zionists, who had sought to reform what they saw as the parochial ethnicity of shtetl life so that the Jews could move beyond that stunted identity to the Communist ideal of a universal brotherhood, ended up as staunch Zionists and fierce defenders of their Jewish, shtetl roots. For them … life in the Soviet Union proved the best antidote of all to their Communist fervor … Taking advantage of a post-World War II repatriation act, most of them left the Soviet Union and returned to Poland, from whence they were eventually able to make their way to Canada, the United States, and Israel.

Moreover, when assessing Polish-Jewish relations under the German occupation, Jewish historians, for example, lend little, if any, weight to the fact that the Poles who blackmailed Jews also often targeted fellow Poles. Moreover, there is a dearth of evidence that Jews suffered at the hands of Polish Communists.

For the most part, in the Soviet zone, Poles were the victims. The persecution and mistreatment of Poles took on a number of forms from anti-Polish agitation and denunciations to arrests and plundering of their possessions. The misdeeds were committed not only by those formally in the service of the Soviet regime, but also by countless unaffiliated helpers from all walks of life and social classes.

The town of ***Mościska*** near Przemyśl is rather typical in this regard. A Jewish eyewitness reports:

> The changes were implemented by the militia and a committee of citizens, the majority of whom were Jews. By and large they were the dregs of the shtetl, led by a few Jewish communists, who now found themselves in charge after being released from jail. The Poles were contemptuous of the

Jewish rabble parading through the streets with red armbands and rifles which they hardly knew how to use, glorying in power that was all too short-lived. A couple of months after they had done the dirty work, these Jewish officials were replaced by Russians and Ukrainians.

In ***Oleszyce***, a small town near Lubaczów, when the Soviets entered on September 27, 1939,

The Jews came out into the street in droves. They threw red flowers and kissed the [Soviet] tanks. Kaufman Durio, a Jew, was the first to hang a red blanket outside his prosperous store. The barber Anhalt (who used to kiss the priest's hand) pulled out some documents attesting to his long-standing membership in the Communist Party. They congratulated one another on their good fortune. … "The Poles are history, good riddance to Poland"—those were the Jewish slogans one heard. …

The first days of "freedom" in Oleszyce were accompanied by plundering and robbery. Livestock and fields belonging to Polish estates were distributed, the park and palace were ruined …

A *selrada* [village council] was formed … consisting entirely of Jews and Ukrainians. … Apart from the *selrada,* the authority to spy and denounce was vested in the local militia and its helpers. At first it consisted of a dozen or so people, later it was reduced to a few. They were almost all Jews. …

There were also Bolshevik confidants in Oleszyce. The fate of the common people was in their hands. Most of the victims were entirely innocent. Among the undercover agents were apparently some Poles and in all probability some Ukrainians. However, the participation of the Jews is beyond question. The most brutal were the four Jews Kaufman, Spindel, Schneider and Schiller. … In a short time Spindel managed to denounce one hundred people who tried to cross over the Soviet-German frontier. … For his accomplishment he was called to Moscow where he personally received a distinction from Kalinin. …

All of the Jewish children and many of the Ukrainian children, more than forty of them, joined the "pioneers." … The Jewish school was moved to the chancellery of the Catholic parish … The upper rooms of the rectory were taken over by a Jewish doctor, Józef Schneebaum. … Unkempt, impudent Jews filled the entire rectory groaning and spitting on the stairs and walls. The patients also came during the night, knocking by mistake on the priest's door …

In ***Borysław***,

From the first days they began to organize a local citizens' militia. I knew almost all of them by sight and their names, but couldn't find a Pole among them. These police wore civilian clothes; they had red bands on their sleeves bearing Russian writing and a crest. They were armed with hunting and sporting weapons that had been seized. … Their task was to point out to the NKVD Polish families which, according to Soviet criteria, should be counted among the exploiters, bourgeois and bloodsuckers. They also helped to carry out searches and assisted with the transport of Polish families into the interior of the Soviet Union. They compiled separate lists of those to be arrested and those to be deported.

A Jew named Wal together with his NKVD colleagues descended on the home of a teacher in order to arrest her 18-year-old son, Jerzy Kozłowski. "That's the one," Wal said, pointing to his schoolmate Jerzy. When the Germans opened up the Soviet jail located in the local commissariat, after their entry into Borysław in June 1941, Jerzy's father found his son's body there, among hundreds of others. His wife fainted as her husband carried him out. A large, public funeral was organized to commemorate the victims of Bolshevism. Later on, the Germans apprehended the parents of Wal, who had fled with the Soviets, but the Kozłowskis wanted no part of German revenge. "It's true their son is a bandit, but the parents are decent people. I would like you to release them," Mrs. Kozłowska told the Germans. They were taken aback by her magnanimity.

A Jewish Communist Party activist from Borysław took over the home from which the Polish family of Józef and Maria Jurkiewicz was expelled, after their bakery in ***Złoczów*** was nationalized at the beginning of 1940.

An eyewitness from ***Horodenka,*** Aleksander Topolski stated that "most of the local men who volunteered to work in the Soviet militia and other security related establishments" were Jewish. He described their activities as follows:

> About a hundred men stood on the sidewalks along the street through the main square. A lot of them were members of the newly formed Communist militia, still in civilian clothes but with red armbands. The militia, or properly the People's Militia, was the name for the new policemen, the civil force of the Communist state. Their job was to maintain public order and to serve the NKVD, the Soviet secret police. …
>
> Those in the streets welcoming the Red Army were waving their arms, cheering, throwing flowers and blowing kisses at the Soviet tanks rolloing by. Most of them were Jewish.
>
> From the moment they took over, the Communists seemed to be obsessed with meetings. All day long there were meetings in the streets, in front of important buildings (especially churches), in the workplaces, in the schools. All of them followed the same routine. People were ordered to attend them and those who simply happened to be in the vicinity were rounded up and persuaded to join the meeting. The militia and party members would take down the name of anybody trying to leave a meeting before the end.
>
> One day our geography teacher Jan Jurkow did not show up for his morning lecture. … In the middle of the night he was taken from his home by the NKVD, the Soviet secret police, assisted by the local militia … A few days later the son of a local printer, a high school student two years older than me named Ziunek Prager, was arrested the same way. … His parents found out that after a week in Horodenka he was transferred to a prison in Kolomyya [Kołomyja] 40 km away where he died a few months later.
>
> More arrests followed. Eventually they became a daily occurrence. We could see no pattern in the selection of people taken from their homes in the middle of the night—lawyers, teachers, factory

workers, small farmers with half an acre of land and one mangy cow or two goats, young people and ninety-year-old pensioners. They were mainly Poles but with a sprinkling of Ukrainians and Jews. ...

Meanwhile the local militia was trying to outdo the NKVD in their attempts to eradicate the "counter-revolutionary element" in Horodenka. They compiled lists of people who had been active in such pre-war "revolutionary" organizations as the Red Cross, Voluntary Fire Brigade, Boy Scouts, and Sokol Gymnast Association. All of them were considered suspect and one by one they were being arrested.

News about the departure of my uncles, aunts and cousins reached the local militia and in no time a red-haired misshapen creature with a star on his cloth cap banged at our front door. As soon as we let him in he started going from room to room looking around. He carried a rifle slung under his arm the way hunters carry their shotguns. He wasn't used to carrying one and it kept banging against furniture and doors. His gibberish, which purported to be Russian, was a mixture of Yiddish, Polish and Ukrainian, garnished by a few Russian words. But his message was clear. We had too much free space in our house and father's study would be requisitioned for two Soviet soldiers.

The three [Jewish] doctors [from Kraków] were caught by the Soviets while trying to cross the border to Romania. Somehow they had contacted Kielec who lived in Stecowa. For a few dollars he agreed to show them the way to Romania and walked them to a spot from where they could see the border. … Although they were left almost at the border, the doctors lost their bearings and ran into a Soviet patrol. Hoping for more lenient treatment by their captors, they led the patrol to Kielec's house. Kielec was arrested together with an innocent friend of his who just happened to be at his house when the patrol arrived.

The prison staff [in the main prison in Czortków] who conducted the search were a forbidding looking lot. They were recent recruits from the local population. … Our new guard, a swaggering young Jewish fellow, was the most abusive of them all, swearing at us in crude Russian.

My family also tried to obtain my release by bribing NKVD officials in Czortkow. They did not know then that NKVD officials at every level of the Soviet administration were terrified of being denounced by somebody for helping imprisoned "enemies of the people". As a rule they would refuse even to meet petitioners. However, the local militiamen would hint to the naïve that they had ways and means to reach the top commissars who could drop the charges and release the prisoners "but it would cost a lot of money."

After the war my mother and my sister Maria told me that they both fell for that. For a pair of golden earings with emeralds and a matching brooch, a local militiaman promised to arrange a meeting with the "top NKVD man".

Next in line of our official visitors were the *vospitateli,* a term loosely translated as educators or counsellors. They were free men who lived outside the prison. … This title was applied to

individuals whose official job was to indoctrinate us with the proper communist ideas, … act as monitors and watch for any signs of negative attitudes toward the Soviet system, all the while quietly organizing a network of stool-pigeons …

All of the *vospitateli* counsellors were Jewish. As a matter of fact nearly the entire administration of the Corrective Labour Colony [in Kiev] was staffed by Jews. They also held all the better jobs where no hard physical work was needed.

Filek Birnbaum, a seventeen-year-old Polish Jew from Sniatyn [Śniatyn] near my hometown of Horodenka, was in charge of our cell. … Filek Birnbaum's dad was a wealthy merchant in Sniatyn. …

Filek Birnbaum had been under the wing of a group of Jewish adult prisoners who were working in the bedstead assembly shop. This was a good place to work. The low norms of production in that workshop had been set in cahoots with the *normirovshchik* (official who establishes the norms), the *naryadchik* (output calculator) and the accounting office. As a result every worker there was a Stakhanovite, a title awarded to those whose output soared well beyond the norm for the job. … Those workers who more than fulfilled their norms were not only paid extra but were given access to special stores with better food and clothing, and sometimes moved into better apartments.

In the early spring of 1940 the NKVD began rounding up and deporting to Siberia or the steppes of Central Asia the "socially dangerous element" from Soviet-occupied Poland. About that time an unexpected visitor came to see my family in the middle of the night. He was the aged Mr Frischling whose son had been my father's pupil before the first world war and whose grandson Dov was in one class with me in our high school. Under the Soviets, Dov's father became the chief of the local militia unit. It was he who sent his old father, Mr Frischling, with a message that our family was on the list of people to be arrested and deported the following morning. They left Horodenka by train in the wee hours of the morning, taking with them a few suitcases and a large wicker basket full of clothes. It was kind of the Frischlings to warn them, but they rewarded themselves promptly for that good deed. No sooner had my family left Horodenka than the Frischlings and their friends helped themselves to everything they fancied in our house.

Wanda Pomykalsi, a young Polish woman who fell into the hands of the NKVD when caught trying to cross the border over to Hungary, recounts a similar experience including betrayal and a brutal interrogation with racial overtones.

Becoming suddenly affable, [Kindrachuk, the Ukrainian militiaman] said, "I will see you across the border safely if you will pay me one hundred zlotys (approximately twenty dollars, U.S.)" … Kindrachuk confided that he would have to take us to the local militia who has spotted us. … The peasant driver cracked his whip, and the horses trotted on to Delatyn. … The peasant stopped in front of a small, dimly lit building. … A few minutes later, he escorted us to the office.

I stopped in astonishment. There at the desk, sat David Glucksman, from my home town [Warsaw]. I had known him when we were students together. A large picture of Stalin with dark

frame was behind him. Glucksman was as surprised as I was. … All I could think to say was, "I had no idea you were a Communist."

Glucksman glanced sharply at Kindrachuk, then looking at me steadily, he said, "I … ah … well … it so happened the job was offered, and here I am."

[In the jail in Nadwórna, after being double-crossed by Kindrachuk]: Here, too, were a few Jewish people, which was a surprise because so many of them served the Communist cause. However, there were also some Jews here who apparently opposed the collectivization and were arrested along with the rest of us. Some warned us that this jail was known for brutal treatment …

Then the story of Rosa was told. "Rosa was a communist," another of the women told me. "Her father is a rabbi. She worked for the NKVD here in Nadworna, and was unexpectedly arrested late one night by the very people she worked for. She was charged with being an enemy of the people.

"The only clue we have to what it was about is that her boyfriend was arrested first. We don't know what he might have said. Then, her father—who had tried to intervene—was also arrested. They charged him, too, with being an 'enemy of the people.'"

The big truck I was led into was tightly packed with fifty men and women. All were dirty from their long prison stay, yet were very intelligent, able people. There were teachers, farmers, foresters, doctors, and even a mayor among them. …

After an hour drive, I saw that the road, visible above the rear half doors, looked familiar. It was the road into Stanislawow [Stanisławów]. Soon the familiar city streets appeared. The truck rounded a corner and entered a large backyard of what was once a school building. Drawn up around it was a large contingent of NKVD and local militia. The militia were carrying recognizable Polish rifles—stolen from the hands of our disarmed Polish soldiers, as I had seen before. This group seemed to be composed of half Jews and half Ukrainians. Despite their local origin, the two groups were working together. This fact struck me as a curious combination because I had always thought the two hated each other. Their hate seemed now to be directed against us, and with their pointed bayonets, they charged up to us with cold fury and roughly ordered us into the basement of the building.

[During interrogations at the prison in Kiev in the spring of 1940]: An NKVD lieutenant sat at the table. He gestured for me to sit down opposite him … He wore a crew cut and appeared to be about thirty-five years old. … He knew some Polish. …

"You were illegally crossing the Hungarian border." …

"If you refuse to give the truth," he said, "You will get a much longer sentence." He blew a stream of smoke from his cigarette, pushed the papers toward me, extended the pen, and said, "Sign." …

Again and again, he would start the interrogation over, repeating himself step by step. …

With two or three hours of sleep, we kept going like this for almost a month, never knowing which would be one's fateful night. …

I was told again, "You Poles are against our best friends, the Germans. We the Soviets, have an alliance with Hitler. Being against the Nazi-communist alliance is counter-revolutionary," he barked. …

Some hours later, he leaned back in his chair and told me he was a Jew. Then he burst into laughter, saying, "Well now … answer me—would a Polish girl be allowed to date a Jewish boy in Poland?"

Good God, I thought, another guilt was poured on me. But I was told about these questions in my cell. These questions were often aimed at Poles because they were Poles, and sometimes even misdirected at the Polish Jews, too.

I forced a smile, and then as mother used to do, I answered the question with a question, "Yes, but how about the good Jewish mother who always wants her son to marry a nice Jewish girl?"

He reddened. Moments later, he began scribbling furiously and was silent. The writing went on and on. … once more I found myself asking a question. I asked whether the churches here stay open or closed.

"The synagogues, yes. The churches, no." he said. He told me that the churches were turned into cinemas or horse stables and named Odessa's Cathedral which was first closed and then leveled by dynamite.

One young observer from ***Łuck***, in Volhynia, noted:

Among those arrested were Ruthenians [Ukrainians] and Jews and both of these minorities started changing their, at first very warm-hearted, attitude toward the actions of the Bolshevik authorities. After several Communist Jews and Ruthenian nationalists were arrested, the more reasonable ones began to turn away from the Reds. The Jewish intelligentsia led by the rabbi evidently drew up a list of Jews involved in the actions of the red authorities. Nevertheless the attitude of both these minorities toward the Poles continued to be very unfriendly and annoyances were the order of the day. This hatred manifested itself particularly during elections to the "supreme soviet," when the Communists (mostly Jews) marked the Poles who dodged the balloting, they brought the urns to the beds of sick people, and also "accompanied" people to the polling place.

Elsewhere in Volhynia, a Pole recalls with some bitterness:

The Ukrainians in the rural areas and the Jews from the urban areas were recruited into Soviet intelligence.

The Polish Jews, who, in general, had been better off than the Polish gentiles, showed their "gratitude" to the Poles. I am not an anti-Semite, but I cannot overlook the fact that the Jews, who had been welcome in Poland for several centuries (since at least the days of King Kazimierz Wielki [the Great]), enthusiastically supported the occupying powers. By collaborating with the Russian Communists, the Jews themselves sowed the seeds of anti-Semitic feelings among the Polish population of the Polish Eastern Borderlands. The Jews had no idea what the Germans were planning for them. Despite the conduct of many Polish Jews, a large bloc of Polish gentiles later

risked their lives to assist the Jews during the later German occupation of Wolyn [Wołyń—Volhynia] and the ensuing Holocaust.

The Polish chief of police, Eugeniusz Kowalski, was told by the Soviet invaders to continue in his post in ***Tuczyn,*** Volhynia. Within a week, however, the NKVD, accompanied by two Jews wearing red armbands, arrived at his home during the night to take him away. Similar scenes were enacted throughout Volhynia.

In ***Kowel,*** a Polish doctor was denounced by a Soviet Jew, a doctor from Kiev, in October 1939, and deported to Karaganda. The Pole's home was taken over by this Jew and later on his wife and four children were also deported to Siberia.

A cruel fate awaited a Polish woman by the name of Marusia, who, dodging machine-gun fire, miraculously managed to escape from Soviet Ukraine in 1932 at the height of the artificial famine that had consumed her immediate family and millions of other kulaks. She settled in ***Dubno*** where she rebuilt her life as a factory worker, only to be betrayed to the NKVD in October 1939 by a Jewish co-worker, a professioinal denouncer, who reported her as an escapee from the USSR. Marusia was imprisoned and disappeared in May 1940.

Anti-Semitism could also be readily invoked as a pretext to strike at Poles. In ***Huta Stepańska*** near Kostopol, a farmer by the name of Henryk Sawicki was denounced as an "anti-Semite" and promptly arrested. His "anti-Semitism" stemmed from the competition that his bakery generated in the town of Stepań, where hitherto Jewish bakeries enjoyed a monopoly.

In a small town near ***Pińsk,*** a Jewish woman with a red armband appeared on the doorstep of the home of a postmaster and denounced him to the NKVD as a Polish government employee. He was arrested and deported, never to be seen again. The Jewish woman had been poor before the war and, out of compassion, the postmaster's wife would often leave milk or bread when passing by her house. When the postmaster's wife asked her Jewish neighbour why she did this after all the help she had received, the woman answered: "Well, maybe someday I'll bring milk for your children." In due course, as the family of a deported Polish government employee, the postmaster's wife and daughter were also exiled.

A Jewish woman by the name of Weizingrin, who lived at number 10 św. Kinga Street in ***Lwów,*** made it her business to get as much information as possible regarding the whereabouts of the two sons of an elderly Polish woman by the name of Janowska, a fellow tenant. One of the sons had been a policeman in Przemyśl; the other a high-ranking member of the scouting organization. Unable to learn anything, Weinzigrin started to harass the Poles who lived in her building. She would scream on the staircase, "*Nu*, your whore, Poland, lies in a grave again for a hundred years."

One Pole recalled how, on October 2, 1939, two Jewish school colleagues from Tarnopol chased after him in Kościuszko Park in Lwów, screaming to the Red militia: "Polish fascist! Catch that fascist!" One of these Jews, Fritz Wechsler, joined the Soviet militia, while the other, Józef Ostersetzer, later became a policeman in the Tarnopol ghetto. Fortunately, this Pole managed to escape from the clutches of his foes.

Tadeusz Niewolański, a sergeant in the Polish army, was less fortunate. After returning from war to Lwów he laid low in his home. When he ventured out on All Souls' Day, November 2, 1939, to visit the

grave of his sister in the Janów cemetery, he was recognized by local Jews whom he knew. They immediately called NKVD soldiers who chased after and captured him in the street. Niewolański was imprisoned in the Brygidki prison where he was most likely murdered.

On October 20, 1939, Iusimov, the Soviet commissar appointed to oversee the Lwów Polytechnic University, convoked a meeting for the purpose of liquidating the prewar students' corporation whose leadership was accused of abuses against the working class. The meeting was attended mostly by Jewish students. When Jewish Communists got up to speak they railed against activists of "anti-Semitic" organizations present in their midst and fingered several Polish students in the audience. In an atmosphere reminiscent of rallies in Nazi Germany, these students were dragged from their places, punched and kicked, and then forcibly removed from the meeting room. They were shot dead in the corridor outside while the orchestra played on at the meeting.

Jewish students—komsomol activists who were often doing poorly in their studies—received the majority of appointments to admission committees and even instigated a witch hunt that led to the removal of Polish faculty members for allegedly oppressing Jewish students. These students were the ones who had gone out of their way to deride prewar Poland and the Poles until a visit by the deputy minister of education, who let it be known that their conduct was unacceptable. Their enthusiasm for the Soviet regime did not wane, however, and was evident by the pictures of Stalin they wore on their breasts.

Polish lawyers were one of the first groups to be arrested after many of them had been denounced by their Jewish colleagues. According to Aleksander Wat, a leading interwar communist literary figure of Jewish descent:

> In Lwów, there were jailers and denouncers, quite a few Jewish denouncers, in fact a very large number. Jews were more inclined to collaborate with the Soviet authorities. Many prewar Communists appeared on the scene, like mushrooms after a rain, and prewar Polish Communists were for the most part Jews.

Stanisław Skrzypek, a Pole arrested in November 1939 for his underground activities, had a first-hand opportunity to view denouncers at work while he was held in the NKVD premises on Pełczyńska Street in Lwów.

> In the course of those two days that I had to wait in the corridor I realized that the N.K.V.D. had succeeded in organizing an information gathering network. Every now and then there would pass in the corridors older men, women, even school students, who came to denounce their friends and colleagues. To be sure most of them were Jews …

In ***Trembowla***, the arrest and mistreatment of Poles was facilitated by local Jews and Ukrainians "who formed the core of the Soviet militia, donned red armbands, were issued rifles and took to collaborating with the Soviet authorities in getting rid of the remnants of Polish influences."

In nearby ***Wierzbowiec,*** local Jews with red armbands pointed out Poles who were then arrested and mistreated by the Soviets.

In ***Skałat***, Maciej Bernard, the head of the new Bolshevik town council, agitated for the pacification and deportation of Poles from the area, and mobilized the Workers' Police, composed almost exclusively of Jews, to carry out those objectives.

A Pole who had made his way to ***Podwołoczyska*** on a reconnaissance assignment for the nascent Polish underground aroused the suspicion of two young, ardent Jewish militiamen who arrested him and brought him to the NKVD office. Before his interrogation, the Pole had managed to eat the notes and photographs he had made. He convinced his NKVD interrogators that he had gotten lost looking for his family. He was released and taken to the train station.

In ***Złoczów***, Stefan Zugaja was arrested in November 1939 after being denounced by a Jewish woman named Lajder, an agent of the NKVD. Until May of 1941 he was imprisoned in the Castle in Złoczów, but his later fate remains unknown.

The Polish underground in ***Czortków*** began collecting information about the activities of the NKVD and its collaborators consisting mostly of Jews, who were especially active in the militia where they compiled dossiers about the local population. As a result of such a denunciation Witold Łoziński, a Polish activist, was arrested already in the first weeks of the occupation. After a failed revolt against Soviet rule staged by the Polish underground on January 21, 1940, mass arrests of suspected Poles ensued based on intelligence reports prepared by local collaborators. One participant in the revolt was fortunate enough to escape to Romania after the NKVD, guided by a young local Jew, descended on his family's home in search of him.

Markus Ajzenszer, a Jew from Mizuń, was assigned the task of organizing the Soviet militia in ***Stryj*** and took an active part in arresting and deporting Poles. He became well-known for his brutal treatment of Polish officers, soldiers, settlers, teachers and priests.

In ***Śniatyn,*** Władysław Bielecki and Wasilewski were two of several teachers at the local high school arrested by the NKVD after being denounced by Jews, who were filled with glee. Bielecki's denouncer confided: "So why did he fail my son? Now he'll sit." Bielecki was executed as a reserve officer of the Polish army.

Stanisław (Staszek) Jackowski, a "Righteous Gentile" who is credited with saving the lives of 32 Jewish men, women, and children in ***Stanisławów***, recalled that "thousands of Jews willingly cooperated with the Soviets after their occupation of eastern Poland in 1939."

An account from ***Zaleszczyki*** states: "My grandfather was deported to Siberia with his wife and four of my father's siblings after being denounced by a Jewish co-worker whom he had helped to get a job." Another Pole from the ***Stanisławów*** region also commented on the large number of Jews who were guilty of betrayal.

An eyewitness from ***Kosów Huculski***, a small town of about 7,000 people in that same voivodship, recalls:

> The first to be arrested were professional military men, police functionaries, township clerks, and some of the forest wardens. Some of the Ukrainians and Jews took an active role in compiling lists of "enemies of the people" and hunting down those earmarked for deportation to Siberia.

In ***Drohiczyn***, the NKVD soon attracted a network of helpers and denouncers made up of Jews and Belorussians. The Jews, in particular, took over important functions in the administration and militia. Out of a population of 2,500, some 30 families, for the most part Poles, were deported to the Gulag.

In ***Wilno,*** which was reoccupied by the Soviets again in the summer of 1940 after their takeover of Lithuania,

> All former Polish civil servants, army officers, large estate holders, factory owners … were arrested and put in prison. The arrests took place mostly at night. They were carried out by NKVD functionaries with the assistance of the local militia consisting mostly of Jews.

The author of that account, a former policeman, was fingered in the town of ***Podbrzezie*** on November 13, 1940 by Eljokum Berson, a Jewish Communist from Wilno who recognized him. He was arrested by the local police and sent for interrogation to Wilno and then to Łukiszki prison. He was sentenced to eight years of hard labour and exiled to Vorkuta.

Jews played a prominent role in the network of NKVD confidants established by the NKVD in ***Wilno*** and turned in many Polish officers in hiding, prewar officials and political activists. Tadeusz Kiersnowski, a prominent lawyer, town councillor and activist in the National Party (Stronnictwo Narodowe), was arrested on July 12, 1940 by the NKVD, who came to his home in the company of a Jew. Kiersnowski was imprisoned in Łukiszki prison and deported to the Gulag on June 23, 1941. That same Jew then went to arrest Dr. Dobrzański, a member of the Polish Committee.

Professor Stanisław Cywiński, a publicist in the nationalist Catholic press, was denounced by Jews in Wilno. He was imprisoned in Kirov, where he died in March 1941 after being severely tortured. But leftists were not immune either: Dewojna, the director of the Revenue Office in ***Białystok,*** was also denounced by Jews and was executed.

According to Polish reports, mass arrests of Poles in the Białystok region commenced in October 1939. The NKVD and the Red militia, recruited mainly from the local Jewish population, used the materials copiously gathered by the illegal Alliance of Communist Youth of Western Belorussia. (Even before the war that ethnically Polish area was not regarded as part of Poland in Communist propaganda.)

Even in small towns of under 1,000 people, such as ***Jody*** near Brasław, there was no shortage of collaborators. According to a Jewish resident,

> The NKVD (Soviet Secret Police) soon created a climate of fear in Jody. A few of our Jewish boys worked with the NKVD and a few Jews became prominent in the new government of Jody. … Our families were considered neutral because of two episodes which brought us suffering under the Russians.

> In December, 1939 our mill in Jody burned to the ground. The next morning my father and my uncles Abraham, Meir, Leibke, and Hillel were arrested and sent to the jail in Braslaw [Brasław], charged with arson and as enemies of the State. Someone, (we think we know who) [one can safely assume it was a fellow Jew—*M.P.*] had told the NKVD that my uncle Hillel had said that "rather than give the mill to the Communists, we will burn it down." Of course, that was not true, but under Soviet "justice" no witness had to face the accused. A signed statement by a single witness was sufficient to condemn anyone to a long prison term or even death. … The following day, my father and my uncle Abraham were released. [This was accomplished with the intervention of Soviet officers quartered in the family home who also helped to get the others out of prison. Poles, on the other hand, rarely had such connections.—*M.P.*] …
>
> The NKVD was systematically arresting and deporting thousands of people. Anyone that was rich in Poland, or was a Polish government employee, or anyone they did not like or just suspected may be an enemy of the state was at risk. A new system of informers developed and many innocent people were arrested and deported without any trial.

In ***Kleck,*** near the Soviet border, a local Jew led some Soviet soldiers to the home of a Polish notary whose automobiles they seized. In February 1940, another local Jew came to register the family, who were subsequently deported to Kazakhstan in April of that year. The notary's wife recalled: "Unfortunately, many of our local Jews assisted the new arrivals [i.e., Soviets] by pointing out families [for deportation] and by taking part in searches and other activities."

In the town of ***Kurzeniec*** near Wilejka, according to a Jewish source,

> The Soviet authorities were helped along in these and other matters by local activists who cooperated with them, often to the detriment of others—Jews as well as non-Jews—and informed on them as to their wealth, political reliability, and so forth. Some people were taxed into poverty, deprived of their houses, furniture, and all material goods. Some were even sent to Siberia as a result of the activities of informers. … Most of these activists had retreated along with the Soviets, well ahead of the approaching Germans, because they feared retribution from the non-Jewish population who were anti-Soviet. … Many of those who fled survived the war. Of the families that activists left behind, none survived. During the first weeks of the German occupation, such an outcome could not be foreseen. Had anybody described such a scenario as eventually coming to pass, we would have considered them deranged.

Bronisław Cianiecki, who lived in an area ***north of Wilno***, described the fate of his family which was ruined by a denunciation.

> In 1940 my father was a medical officer in the area of Hoduciszki, Święciany, Łyntupy and Moldziewicze. A Jewish woman by the name of Birgsztajn, his assistant, reported to the Soviet authorities that my father was connected with, helped and sheltered enemies of the Soviet Union. In the middle of winter, the NKVD arrested my father in his white frock and with his medical first-aid case. My mother and we four underage children—two older sisters, a younger brother and myself—

> were left to fend for ourselves. After a while a local Belorussian state employee told my mother in confidence that any day we would be exiled to Siberia. We escaped to Wilno at night taking refuge with some friends. The NKVD found us indirectly through the Lithuanian police. We four children were taken away from our mother by force and placed in a house near the Orthodox church on Ostrobramska Street. … After some time we were taken from Ostrobramska Street and, together with a few hundred Polish children, placed in some cottages located in a forest on the Wilia River more than a dozen kilometres from Wilno … [When the Germans attacked in June 1941], during the night the Jewish-Bolshevik teaching staff shut the doors of the children's buildings with steel bars, leaving us to die without food, while they drove off in vehicles … The children yelled and cried terribly. The doors were opened by a woman from a forester's lodge who happened to be gathering dry twigs in the forest and responded to the children's screaming. Hundreds of children scattered in the forest and I do not know what became of them. The four of us returned to Wilno holding each other's hands.

Eugeniusz Klimowicz, a member of a Polish underground organization in ***Naliboki*** northeast of Nowogródek, was arrested and imprisoned by the Soviets. During his interrogation he was shown a denunciation concocted by Chaja Szymonowicz, a local Jewish woman.

The area around ***Jedwabne*** had a particularly strong Polish anti-Soviet underground. On June 25, 1940 a resolution was passed at a special meeting of the Communist Regional Committee Office in Białystok to engage the security forces, the militia and the local committees to liquidate the Polish underground. (According to Soviet sources, the attempts to recruit Polish agents and informants was largely unsuccessful and their usefulness was very limited; members of the Polish underground, who were apprehended by the Soviets, were spared in exchange for their services as agents.)

A corporal in the interwar Polish army from the village of ***Witynie*** near Jedwabne, who was next in command of the local Polish underground organization, was delivered into the hands of his sadistic NKVD torturers on July 4, 1940 by a local Russian resident and a Jew by the name of Jocher Lewinowicz, who had been put in charge of the newly formed village cooperative. After enduring months of torture in various prisons, he was coerced to confess and was sentenced to eight years in the Gulag. He was deported to the far northern reaches of Russia in January of the following year.

Kazimierz Żebrowski, a small landowner who was denounced to the NKVD after returning from the September 1939 campaign, managed to flee from his home in ***Żebry-Wybranowo*** near Łomża and went into hiding. The NKVD became frequent visitors, in particular a Polish Jew who served in their ranks, harassing the family on account of the disappearance of its head. The entire family was eventually arrested on June 20, 1941, at two in the morning, and deported.

During the voting in November 1939 to sanction the incorporation of this area into Soviet Belorussia, an NKVD officer accompanied by a Jew came to the rectory in ***Szumowo*** to ensure that the priests went to the polls. After the German invasion in June 1941, when the NKVD office in Śniadowo was broken into, one of the priests from Szumowo, Rev. Kazimierz Łupiński, was shown a denunciation filed by a local Jew accusing him of contacts with a Polish army officer.

In the Volhynian villages near ***Rokitno***, arrogant Jews in red armbands—in their new roles as reeves, militiamen and functionaries of all manner—became conspicuous. They struck fear in the villagers when they came around to record the names of the residents and carry out inventories of all kinds—landholdings, livestock, etc. They posted placards depicting Polish farmers as yoked oxen and summoned them to lengthy meetings at which the Polish authorities were maligned. Jews also came around to purchase cattle and hogs at cut-prices, urging the Poles: "Sell quickly because you'll need the money. The freight trains have already been assembled for you at the station in Rokitno."

In ***Krzemieniec***, Jews assumed leading positions in the administration and educational facilities. The task of purging the holdings of the library of the famed lyceum fell to a young Jewish Communist. Jews were omnipresent in the electoral committees agitating in favour of the formal incorporation of Eastern Poland into the Soviet Union. A large number of NKVD confidants, recruited from the ranks of local Jewish Communists, facilitated the arrests of scores of Polish officials. In October 1939, the NKVD, accompanied by local Jewish and Ukrainian militiamen, arrested Zaufal, the starosta (county supervisor) of Krzemieniec.

Jan Sułkowski's turn came on March 22, 1940, Good Friday, when he was arrested in Krzemieniec after being denounced by a Jewish neighbour, Josek Kagan, an informer for the NKVD. Sułkowski, the county secretary, was charged with such crimes as "associating with kulaks" and "speaking of the poor quality of products from the USSR." The case was a travesty of justice with local Jews testifying against him as "witnesses" and a Jewish people's judge rubber-stamping the verdict.

His daughter, Janina Sułkowska Gładuń, recalls her own arrest in Krzemieniec in late March 1940. She was imprisoned in ***Dubno*** for a year together with her Polish colleagues from the underground and was subjected to forms of torture and racist taunting at the hands of the sadistic Jewish warden similar to those administered by the Nazis in their prisons.

> I recognized Truchun [Trukhun] as the NKVD officer who had arrested my father; he was accompanied by an ordinary Red Army soldier and a local Jewish militiaman. I did not know that most of my underground comrades were similarly being rounded up, or were already in custody and undergoing interrogation. Our underground organization was being methodically smashed by the NKVD.
>
> Truchun announced that I was under arrest and we were pushed into a corner of the kitchen while a search was conducted. The house was ransacked and my personal property scattered; Truchun threw my letters and a school photo of me into his briefcase. They were searching for "evidence"—and for booty which they could claim. I was frightened that they would discover my secret messages and orders which I kept in a hollowed-out soap near the stove. False ID's and other incriminating documents were hidden in our sofa and in an old wine-skin. The Jew had heard something rustling in the wine-skin and was greedily throttling it like it was an animal that had swallowed something valuable. But luckily for us he abandoned the search to go with Truchun to get a car. …
>
> I was driven to Dubno by car and immediately taken to the office of NKVD Colonel Vinokur, the *Nachalnik* or Commandant for the region. His office was crammed with an assortment of furniture,

food, and plundered items that included commodes, sofas, tapestries and a glass-case with jams and conserves. …

Vinokur was seated behind a large desk and politely asked me to sit down across from him in a plush chair. … Chaim Vinokur spoke to me in Ukrainian (he was a Jew from Kiev) while I answered in Polish. … The interrogators peppered me with questions in Russian … A rather dim-witted Jewish girl was called in as a translator but I was able to befuddle her. She was quickly sent away by Vinokur who would soon demonstrate to the boys from Moscow the finer points of an interrogation.. … The session had been going in circles for several hours and I was very tired. … How easily I had fallen into his trap! I felt like a child caught with her hands in the cookie jar.

"Take this *polskaia kurva* [Polish whore] out!" Vinokur waved his hand as the men from Moscow nodded their heads in awe. … I soon discovered that most of the positions in the prison and security systems were given to the dregs of Jewish society. …

Following my famil's arrest, my interrogations became more vicious as I would spend some 40 sessions on a chair beneath a glaring light surrounded by NKVD interrogators. The anger in Vinokur and Titow now flowed to the surface. They screamed in my face and promised me a death sentence. They paraded tortured friends in front of me whom they would later murder. They kept me in solitary confinement and in a frozen cell. And they tortured me. The majority of my interrogations took place in the first half of my year-long stay in Dubno jail which was from March 1940 to March 1941.

One particular session is burned into my memory. It seemed like another dreary night. I was dismissing Titov's endless and predictable questions which he spit into my face, with my usual shrugs, when Colonel Vinokur emerged from the background and twisted my chair close to his face.

"So you don't think I could just kill you like a dog?" he growled.

I sensed that this was something more than the usual threats. He narrowed his etes and a muscle twitched in his cheek. He undid his holster and took out his revolver. … Suddenly I felt him brushing my cheek with the cold barrel, and then against my temple. I could distinctly feel the rolling of the tumbler, and then the *click* of the trigger. My God! He was playing Russian roulette against my head!

"Believe. Believe, you Polish cunt!" Vinokur screamed and pulled the trigger. The sound of the hammer exploded in my head—but no bullet came forth. And then he pulled it a second time, and a third time. … I came close to fainting … and then Vinokur put his gun away. …

A week later I was to experience another unusual and "shocking" method of torture which had been concocted by my tormentors. I became a guinea pig in their experimentation in the art of arriving at the "truth." This was their "electric chair."

I was taken for a nightly session and was seated in the regular chair under the light. … suddenly I was thrown out of the chair by some great unseen force! I found myself on the floor with my legs twitching. What had happened?

They picked me up and threw me back into the seat. I was asked the same question, which I barely heard and didn't answer—and once more I was hurled into the air. I shook like a rag doll. The shock was repeated a third time and I started to choke. After a minute or so of trying to catch

> my breath, the disembodied voice of Colonel Vinokur boringly announced that he was satisfied—for now.
>
> I was dragged back to my cell. My body felt peculiar, but it was my mind that took somewhat longer to recuperate. Marusia [my cellmate] later told me that I was babbling and sobbing. …
>
> It was also a chair that in a less dramatic way caused even more excruciating and much longer-lasting pain. I was barely 5 foot 2 inches and my legs dangled like a child's when seated in the interrogation chair. The sessions almost always lasted through the night for eight hours and longer, during which I was not allowed to eat or go to the washroom, nor could I get off this throne to rest my feet on the ground. The cumulative effect of muscular inactivity and the build-up of blood in my lower limbs caused my feet and legs to swell—and produced horrible pain, especially when first trying to walk. …
>
> However, I realized that my treatment at the hands of the NKVD was mild compared to what many of my friends were subject to, perhaps in the very same interrogation chambers. Leon Kowal was repeatedly beaten as was Pius Zaleski. Others had needles jammed under their fingernails, their fingers were crushed and their testicles burned. Women were also beaten or kept in cells of freezing water or human sewage. Many of them would eventually be murdered. Yet what I was to experience later in the Gulag was such that I looked upon my stay in Dubno as my "golden days."

Zbigniew Jan Dąbrowski, who was imprisoned in ***Łuck*** before being deported to Kolyma**,** shared a cell with a Jewish dentist from Torczyn who had been denounced for hiding valuables and arrested. This Jew was again denounced inside the jail by a Jewish kapo who had been planted in their cell and in whom the dentist confided. When Dąbrowski was finally taken to trial after five months of interrogation, he and his fellow accused were assigned a lawyer from the security office by the name of Rachman, a Jew who spoke Polish poorly. Rather than defending his "clients," Rachman worked hand in glove with the judges to ensure their speedy conviction as counter-revolutionaries. Dąbrowski received a fifteen-year sentence of hard labour in the Gulag.

In ***Derażne,*** local Jews and Ukrainians denounced the former Polish authorities and openly rejoiced at the downfall of Poland. Local Jews (as well as Ukrainians) were also involved in the arrest of Polish settlers in the colony of ***Piłsudy (Horodziec)*** near Antonówka, in Sarny county.

In ***Niweck***, a colony near Dąbrowica, local Ukrainians and Jews, among them members of the Communist committee, robbed the homes of the Polish settlers and denounced them to the Soviet authorities.

An eyewitness reported on the frequent denunciations and arrests in ***Borysław.***

> Denunciations and arrests ensued. The informers—mostly Jewish Communists—are operating at full steam. For the most part those who held state positions—policemen, judges and teachers—were being arrested. Even a forester was arrested. Those who had been imprisoned were loaded into cattle cars the windows of which were covered with barbed wire. Even women and children were forced into the wagons. Then at the main train station in Drohobycz the wagons were hooked up to form one train.

> My godmother, Janina Latowska, helped to hide two policemen. These people had to change their sleeping places every night. They had to do this because arrests usually occurred at night. One day they took my godmother and her two sons, Jan and Kazik, and her daughter, Jadzia, from their home. Two days later they took the family of my cousin Kazimierz Turkiewicz along with his wife and four children, the youngest of which was six months.
>
> We tried to help our family, but it wasn't easy. We went to Drohobycz daily to bring them some food. Sometimes we were successful—it depended on who was guarding the prisoners at the time. And one had to bring some vodka [as a bribe]. …
>
> Poles were brought into Drohoboycz over a two week period. One day two locomotives were attached to the wagons and the train moved forward. Everyone was in tears—it was apparent that they were being deported to Siberia. Those poor unfortunates in the wagons intoned the Polish national anthem, "Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła" ["Poland has not yet perished"].

After learning of a Polish student's participation in the war with Germany as a cadet, a komsorg (komsomol organizer) at his high school in ***Drohobycz*** rebuked him: "You fought on the side of the *Pans*, you defended the capitalists and large landowners of *Pans'* Poland." Even though the school was a Polish-language school, the komsomol consisted almost entirely of Jews and Ukrainians. At a meeting of the heads of school committees the son of a Jewish lawyer railed against the Poles, "You're already in the sack. All that's left to do is to tie you up and throw you in the water." Poles were openly discriminated against in state offices. Soon mass arrests and deportations ensued—the victims were all Poles.

A Jew by the name of Sussman, who became the director of his now nationalized brickyards in Drohobycz, was notorious for mistreating and insulting his Polish workers, whom he also underpaid. At their grumblings he thundered, "Stupid Polacks. Don't you know that you're already all in a sack and all that's left is to ship you out." He threatened to call in the NKVD and indeed some of the workers were denounced and arrested. Sussman was equally outspoken at meetings: "That damned rule of Polish *Pans*, capitalists and exploiters has come to an end. The *Pans'* Poland has fallen apart and will never return." In a highly unusual turn of events, the workers struck back at this erstwhile capitalist and denounced him as an exploiter. It turned out that Sussman had had connections with the prewar Polish government and, at that time, denounced Communists. Sussman himself was arrested by the NKVD in a stroke of poetic justice.

When Tadeusz Chciuk, a courier for the Polish government-in-exile, dropped by unexpectedly to see his family in Drohobycz during one of his missions to Poland, his mother informed him of the sudden interest taken in him by Hela Wajs, a Jewish neighbour who had become an ardent champion of the Soviet regime and a vociferous opponent of Poland. His mother warned him: "You have to be terribly cautious and don't show yourself to people. Most of the Soviet supporters are found among the Jews. There are swarms of people like Wajs. You have to be on your guard day and night."

Little wonder then that Chciuk, like Poles at the time, proclaimed:

> we, Poles, fear Jews—not all of them, of course, but when we fear, we fear them more than anyone else. They are first in line to cooperate with the Bolsheviks, they are the most dangerous, they are

> everywhere, they are the most ardent Communists, they know a lot, they help to carry out a thorough investigation of the community. I myself have such colleagues from high school and university.

To this a Jewish woman, a family friend, replied, "I know, I know. You speak the truth. But you yourself said that they are not all like that. … And for those respectable Jews, other Jews, those Communists, are also dangerous." Chciuk answered her: "Certainly. But not as dangerous as for the Poles, not even half as dangerous." This righteous woman offered a heartfelt apology for all those Jews, whom she also detested, who were cooperating with the Bolsheviks.

Another recent memoir from Lwów describes the warm reception given by many Jews to the invading Soviet army; their employment as informers at schools; their pro-Soviet political activity especially during the sham "elections" of October 1939; their political opportunism; and their anti-Polish agitation. The author also notes sporadic acts of Jewish solidarity with Poles, as when an elderly Jewish woman was brought to tears by the sight of Jews flocking to greet the Soviet invaders and the loss of "her" homeland—Poland.

Scores of Polish priests were imprisoned, deported or executed in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland between September 1939 and July 1941. One of them was Rev. Adam Gromadowski from the town of ***Podwołoczyska*** near Skałat, who was arrested by the NKVD in April 1940, along with others, for distributing Polish underground newspapers and later executed. The arrest came about as a result of betrayal by a Jewish family in whom some Poles had confided. The death of Rev. Wacław Rodźko, pastor of ***Traby*** in the archdiocese of Wilno, was also attributed to local Jews. He was murdered in May 1940 in the village of Rosalszczyzna while visiting a sick parishioner.

Rev. Józef Zator-Przytocki, who organized illegal crossings of Poles to Romania and Hungary and supplied endangered Poles with false documents, was more fortunate. Although betrayed to the NKVD by a Jewish confidant, he was able to leave ***Stanisławów*** in the Soviet zone surreptitiously and make his way to Kraków in the German zone.

Contrary to what some Jewish apologists contend, moving into Soviet positions did not necessarily signify that such well-placed Jews cut off contact with fellow Jews, forsook their Jewish roots in favour of the communist ideology, and no longer functioned as Jews. The argument that they should not be judged as Jews, but simply as Communists who happened to be of Jewish origin, is by and large untenable. There were just too many cases where such Jews were able to reconcile their new positions of status with their Jewishness.

In the town of ***Kisielin***, in Volhynia, for example, Jews from the town council and militia transferred large quantities of Jewish goods from the town by stealth to store in hiding places in the countryside. A local teacher by the name of Ginzberg, who taught Jewish religion before the war, became a vociferous anti-religion agitator during the Soviet occupation who targeted Polish and Ukrainian youth. He continued nonetheless to practice Jewish religious rituals in his home and to instil them into his two sons who had joined the komsomol. (Confronted by a Pole regarding his hypocritical behaviour, out of fear of being

exposed Ginzberg ceased his anti-Christian agitation.) A Jew from Kisielin who oversaw the collection of the onerous taxes levied on church property openly relished, in the presence of a Catholic priest, the prospect of the Soviet authorities destroying the "Polish" church.

CHAPTER TWELVE

An Atmosphere of Fanaticism

The mood of insecurity that descended on the towns and villages under Soviet rule cannot be adequately explained without regard to the role of Jewish Communists and those who were simply pro-Soviet. Very often their fanaticism was expressed by open displays of anti-Polish and anti-Christian sentiments. Surprisingly, anti-German sentiments were not voiced by the Jews publicly even in areas that initially experienced a short period of German rule. Gratuitous denunciations of Poles assumed massive proportions. Jewish officials, who very often had no suitable professional qualifications for their new positions, became omnipresent. Poles were removed from their positions and Polish monuments and library collections were sacked.

The sullen atmosphere that enveloped ***Przemyśl*** was captured evocatively in a memoir recorded contemporaneously by Jan Smołka, the town's principal archivist. Smołka proved to be an astute observer of those events. The brief German occupation did not pit the Polish population against the Jewish townspeople. As one Jewish witness recalls,

> When the Germans came to Przemyśl in 1939 they burned the old synagogue. I saw Polish people rushing with water to try to extinguish the fire.

Already within hours of the Soviet entry on September 28, 1939, a group of Jewish women burst into the grounds of the local museum where Smołka was employed. They trampled the flower beds and shrubbery and tore out flowers with which they ran to greet the Red Army. When Smołka left the museum that evening,

> Throngs of Jews had poured into the streets and squares, which were overflowing, making it difficult to squeeze through. The Jews were overjoyed, insolent and arrogant. … All sorts of riff-raff and criminal elements emerged and pushed their way around … The shop windows were lit up and adorned with (rather poor) portraits of Lenin, Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, and other Bolshevik dignitaries. The same scene recurred over the next few days. The Jews were delighted. In the shops they screamed vulgarities about Poland which they directed at the Polish public. Even young Jewish women vented their joy. "You have no idea how happy I am that the Soviets have come," said one young Jewish woman to another on Franciszkańska Street.
>
> Every evening Jewish women assembled in front of the building of the Revenue Office to sing to the Bolsheviks. When the administrative offices were opened up they were inundated with Jewish officials. Except for the top positions that were given over to Bolsheviks sent in for that purpose, here and there a token Aryan could be found, usually a Ukrainian, for decoration, but the bulk of the officials were Jews.

> The Bolsheviks held various rallies in the town square where they erected a hideous stage of sorts which was painted red. They convened all those over whom they had some influence, above all the youth with their teachers. There was never any shortage of Jews to fill the square en masse. Once during such a masquerade the Jews started to shout invectives at the [Catholic] bishops and priests, but when some boy from the crowd yelled back at them "Down with the rabbis!" they threw themselves at him and wanted to beat him up. Luckily he escaped. Anti-religious propaganda targeted only the Christian faiths and not the Jewish religion, which the Jews were able to practice freely. They openly kept the Sabbath and baked matzo which they displayed on stands, but at the same time carefully scrutinized those who attended church and reported them to the authorities.
>
> The Bolsheviks expelled Poles from the shops and kiosks and in their place brought in Jews. The entire public life was in their hands. … Poles could not show their faces among them. I myself saw how they destroyed on Kazimierz Wielki Street the goods of a small Polish boy who was in tears over the loss of—it seemed—his only belongings.
>
> Many Jews wandered in the street without any apparent purpose. In reality they occupied themselves with spying on the Polish population. They looked into who of the Poles remained and what they were doing, and informed on them to the authorities. For that reason many people found themselves in jails or in the Russian interior. The Jews spied ardently and manifested animalistic hatred towards all things Polish. Across from the museum, a Jewish woman by the name of Mehler, who lived at 8 Władycze Street, used to sit at her window and look at what was happening in the museum. So that no one would see her she covered her head with a green cloth and hid it behind some flowers. Disguised in this manner she would sit there idly at the window for long hours.
>
> On the first floor of the neighbouring house lived a Jewish tinsmith who also watched the museum and informed [Roman] Szancer [a communist who was recently put in charge of the museum] that counter-revolutionaries were visiting the Leśniaks [Adam Leśniak was active in the museum from before the war] and that Mrs. Leśniak was a remnant of the Polish bourgeoisie. He reported that Mrs. Leśniak did nothing under Polish or Soviet rule, spent her time in the garden and ate chicken and goose. Szancer was alarmed at this denunciation because he was afraid that the authorities might accuse him of not watching over the museum carefully enough. He therefore explained to the Jew that it was impossible for counter-revolutionaries to be coming by because he himself remained at the museum during the entire day and would have seen that those who came were there on official business.

Groundless denunciations by Jews continued. Jews who before the war worked at market stalls or as craftsmen now arrived in the museum as members of official inspection committees and the NKVD. Jewish officials and staff were particularly intent on destroying Polish libraries and artifacts, both public and private, whenever the opportunity presented itself. The holdings of the museum were devastated by them and many paintings ruined. Smołka describes a number of such incidents that occurred in Przemyśl:

> Around the middle of October [1939] the painter Marian Stroński brought word to [Adam] Leśniak that the Bolsheviks were evicting Rev. Dr. [Jan] Kwolek, [a professor at the higher seminary in Przemyśl and director of the diocesan archives] from his home and that his library had to be saved.

> Leśniak ran immediately to the building of the Revenue Office where Rev. Kwolek lived on the third floor. Upon entering the building he saw various people, mostly Jews, wandering in the courtyard and corridors. Official documents were being removed from offices and bookcases on the third floor and thrown out the window into the muddy courtyard. This task was in the hands of residents of Przemyśl: three young Jewish women, one Jew and two Ukrainian women. Leśniak approached them and suggested politely that it was a shame to throw these documents out because they might still be useful, even as paper. One of the Jewish women shot back: "What for? Whatever is Polish has to be destroyed. We can't afford to leave anything behind from the Polish bourgeois regime. It is now the time of the Soviets and Ukraine. We have nicer and better things." And they continued to dump things into the courtyard. From there these documents were taken to a pond in Bakończyce, so that no one would think of salvaging them.

There are numerous Jewish testimonies that corroborate Smołka's assessment. According to Max Wolfshaut-Dinkes, who "never knew a non-Jewish communist" in Przemyśl,

> The Jews lived in fear, haunted by the prospect of expropriation and deportation to Siberia. They mistrusted one another and, above all, they feared the Jewish communists. These latter were fanatical supporters of the régime, zealous servants of the authorities. Faithful to their 'duty', they fought unscrupulously against the 'terrible' class enemy, composed of shopkeepers and craftsmen [most of whom were Jews—*M.P.*].

In another passage Wolfshaut-Dinkes states:

> I must confess that I found the conduct of the Jewish communists during the Soviet occupation terribly repugnant: they had a far too brutal attitude towards their employers. The Polish and Ukrainian employees did not denounce their former employers as exploiters so that their undertaking would be nationalised and they themselves sent to Siberia; unfortunately, the Jewish communists had no hesitation in doing this.

Another Jew from Przemyśl concurs in this assessment:

> Most of the [Zionist] activists left Przemysl as they feared an "invitation" to the NKVD. The secret service arrests were undoubtedly the result of denunciations made by local communists, who operated as denouncers by order from above.

A Jew from Przemyśl who moved to Lwów to hide his capitalist background (his family owned a factory that employed a hundred workers) unexpectedly ran into trouble there.

> I enrolled into a course of Soviet bookkeeping, and soon started working for them as a full bookkeper. I got one of the highest salaries … However this still did not go on smoothly; they discovered (with the help of Jewish Communists from Przemyśl) that I had a wealthy (read

criminal) past. I was fired, but managed to get each time another job, and so to survive the time of the paradise occupation.

But Jews from Przemyśl point out that it was not just seasoned pre-war Communists they feared, but ordinary Jews caught up in the revolutionary fervour of those times. As one Jew recalls,

> A boy from one of the poor families, whom we fed every Friday, was the first one to declare himself a Communist when the Russians came in, and he was the one who took over our apartment and belongings. We didn't have to wait for the Germans at all—it was a Jewish fellow whom we had supported all along. He said, "Now I'm a Communist; the Communists are here and I'm the boss and you're going to be subservient to me." He lay in my bed and insisted that my mother serve him food in bed and polish his shoes. … As it turned out, his Communistic patriotism did not bring him glory. He just got a job as a guard.
>
> … Naturally, this was very heartbreaking to us because this was the boy we had known since he was a child. He grew up under our own eyes, and here he was the one who was kicking us out.

Another Jew recalls how non-political relatives of his rallied to the support of the Soviet occupiers:

> When the Russians conscripted my father, he rose quickly to the rank of lance corporal and was involved in the training on new Polish conscripts. … My mother's younger brother, Abramek, became an ardent spokesman for the Communist cause and her older brother, Mundek … came under my father's command during his military training.
>
> My father liked the Russians …
>
> These relatively good times were not to last. The return of the Nazis …

The testimony of local Poles reinforces this picture:

> One problem was that the Jewish people knew the Przemyśl intelligentsia very well. When the Soviets came, the Jews would give them the names for the proscriptive lists. They sucked up to the Soviets terribly. They dominated all the offices, there were young, often uneducated, Jews everywhere. We, young people right after the *matura* examination [matriculation], were pretty shocked by that, especially as we could not get any white-collar jobs at that time. I myself worked as a blacksmith's assistant.

> … when the Soviets came to Przemyśl … everyone was obliged to register at "Prowspiłka," which was a trade union. … That is where I met Hertzberger [who came from an Orthodox Jewish family]. He was sitting next to some Soviet dignitary. Plenty of rich Jews were waiting to be registered … They were all supposed to tell their biographies in order to be admitted to "Prowspiłka." That Hertzberger was censoring their stories. When Buchband had told his story, Hertzberger asked: "Pray tell me, who owned that ironmonger's in Kazimierzowska Street?" Then Buchband leaned towards me and whispered: "Damn you!" and said aloud: "No, it wasn't mine, it

was my wife's." The other Jews all used similar excuses. … the Jews who had been shop owners, weren't [admitted]. … So, on the one hand he was orthodox, on the other hand he cooperated quite closely with the Communists, being very much involved with them.

Democratic slogans issued by the Soviet government resulted in the Jews starting to take the posts in the militia and the party offices, turning into Communists. They would put on peaked caps and when they passed one another in the street, their greeting would be: "Hello, comrade!"

Along with the Soviet rule came hunger. The Jews were behaving in a provocative way at that time, pushing their way through people queuing for food, thus evoking anti-Semitic feelings among the Poles. Some Jews contributed to that themselves, saying with satisfaction that now came the end of Poland. Following the Soviet propaganda, they would say: "The Poland of the lords is over." The Jewish intelligentsia did not take part in that, however. The ones who protested were lower classes, mostly petty shopkeepers [who depended on Christians for their livelihood—*M.P.*]. …

I remember that once, during the Soviet occupation, a teenage Jewish boy joined the people queuing for bread (you could queue the whole day and get nothing) and, pushing his way to the front, announced that he was not going to stand in the queue because "the Poland of the lords" was over. No one could say anything to that, since the queue was watched by a Jewish policeman who took the boy's side and let him go first.

A Pole who lined up at the German commission in Soviet Przemyśl to register to return to his home in the German zone in May 1940 recalled how the petitioners, who included many Jews, were mistreated by the Soviet functionaries: "A Jewish militiaman ran up, threw me to the ground by my collar, and kicked me …"

Throughout Eastern Poland the impressionable Jewish youth seemed to be enraptured by the New Order. Abraham Brumberg, who was a student at a Jewish high school in Soviet-occupied ***Wilno***, recalls the mood that still prevailed in his school in January 1941. The collective psychosis that seemed to overtake the students was markedly different from the atmosphere in schools with Polish students.

I was a student at the Yiddish Real Gimnazye, where most of my fellow students had enthusiastically welcomed the New Order and became members of the Young Pioneers, the Communist children's organization. They trumpeted their love for Stalin and their detestation of the "bourgeoisie," among whom only a few weeks earlier they had counted some of their dearest friends.

Even when their would-be Soviet protectors turned on them, Jews could be found who lost none of their pro-Communist and anti-Polish zeal. For example, a Jewish woman from Łódź by the name of Hinda was caught crossing the German-Soviet border illegally. The Soviets accused her of spying for Germany and imprisoned her even though she insisted at every turn that she was a committed Communist who had done time in prison in Poland. Not only did she try to ingratiate herself with the guards and authorities in every conceivable way, but also used every opportunity to inform the Russians how bad the Jews had it under

Polish rule, how they were persecuted, and what poverty they lived in. Another young Jew from Łódź, also an ardent communist, continued to defend the Communist ideology and the educational values of labour camps to, of all people, his fellow camp inmates.

One of the most shameful examples of collaboration involved prewar literary figures, for the most part Jews, who converged on ***Lwów*** after the German invasion. Some of their exploits have been described in Tadeusz Piotrowski's *Poland's Holocaust* and Jerzy Robert Nowak's *Przemilczane zbrodnie.* They were employed, in Stalin's words, as "engineers of the human soul." Their talent was put to good use during the "referendum" which was held to legitimize the Soviet takeover of Eastern Poland. They were also needed to staff Communist newspapers published in Polish (which specialized in denigrating Poland, Poles and Christianity), to edit new textbooks in Polish "history" and "literature," to establish ties with the working class, to participate in mass mobilization campaigns, to promulgate official Soviet policies, to propagandize Soviet ideology, and to appear in public with Soviet writers and dignitaries.

Few of these members of the Communist intellectual and literary élite departed from their chosen paths, and even fewer of those ever acknowledged their erroneous ways. One of the few who did so was Aleksander Wat, who would later speak of this period as his "abasement" under Communism and insist on paying the price for his two to three years of "moral insanity."

Most of these Jewish intellectuals, however, who resurfaced in Stalinist Poland, contented themselves with passing the years as Communist mouthpieces, denouncing one another, or, much more frequently, as "non-conformist" intellectuals. Jerzy Borejsza (Beniamin Goldberg), for example, denounced several scholars in Lwów, including Dr. Antoni Lewak, director of the publishing house at the famed Ossolineum Institute, who was executed in Kiev in April 1940.

But above all, it was ordinary Jews who swelled the ranks of the regime's offices and organs of oppression and whose commitment ensured the success of its policies in the field. While there is a marked tendency in Western writing to advance the view that Jews who took part in such activities were estranged from and even ostracized by their community, the biographies gathered in this book amply belie that contention. Michael (Moishe Mordechai) Goldberg, who was born in ***Pińsk***, Polesia, in 1916, presents a story that is not at all untypical. Like most Jews, he was raised in a household that was religious, conservative, and intensely nationalistic, was brought up in a community that fostered those values, and attended religious schools that molded the young generation in those traditions. These became lasting values that Goldberg, despite his many transformations, never forsook.

> I soon began to attend school. The schools at that time were styled in the form of a cheder, (a Hebrew school), but with a more modern system which taught the Polish language and mathematics. However, the main emphasis of our education was based on Jewish religious and nationalistic ideals which planted in our young minds the roots of Jewish heritage. I thus completed five years of private studies. As a result of the influence of my religious school teachers, I became very religious during that span of time. I remember that I used to go to pray three times a day in the neighborhood shul. … My father [who ran a successful tailor shop], on the other hand, was far from

the religious persuasion. He was, from his earliest years, very active in the Marxist-Zionist party. …

At the age of 17, I met a girl my age. … She became a great influence on my thinking and she brought me into the Halutz Youth organization. This was a Zionist organization which believed in the creation of a Jewish homeland. I became very active in this organization whose ideals I saw as the only solution to the problems of my people. …

During this time, I met a new friend, Rosenberg, who was to play a large role in my future. He was one of the leaders of the illegal Marxist youth organization in Poland. He brought me into the dream of a society which would solve all the international economic and social problems. I was carried away with this dream—that only a socialist revolution would solve the Jewish problem as it would solve all the other societal problems. I felt I had to join a movement which could improve our life in all aspects. I gave up the dream of leaving Poland as an impossible dream. …

This was the year [i.e., 1937] I was to be called to serve in the Polish army, a situation which created problems for my father. First of all, he had become dependent upon me, and second of all, being a smart man, my father predicted the oncoming war. He decided to do everything in his power to see that I avoid serving time in the army. He went to a special complex to lose weight and arrived at the stage in which he was unable to do any physical work. Then he went for a government medical examination which decided that he could not support his children. I thus became the only provider for our family. I realized later what a personal sacrifice my father had to make to accomplish the task of keeping me out of the army.

As we have seen, with the arrival of the Soviets invaders in September 1939, Polish officials were fingered by Jews in Pińsk, the workers' guard in that predominantly Jewish city executed captured Polish officers and policemen, and a Jewish mob swarmed the Catholic seminary, rounded up the priests and clerics and threatened to execute them. Oblivious to these events, Michael Goldberg embarked on his new career and became a mainstay of the new regime.

On the morning of September 17th, I saw the remaining Polish soldiers crossing the bridge over the river, leaving Pinsk on their way south, hoping to escape the Red Army. We witnessed the destruction of the bridge by the retreating Polish army. That was the end of the Polish rule of Pinsk. A few hours later, we saw the oncoming Russian troops. I remember a moment when my sister Yetta and I started to kiss each other from excitement when we saw the "liberators". [Since the Germans had never entered the town, Goldberg doubtless had in mind the town's "liberation" from the Poles.] And again my intelligent father passed a remark. "Don't celebrate, give the new rule a chance to see how it is in life." For me, personally, this looked like the final judgment, the beginning of an era of justice for all. …

Before the war, when I was active in the illegal Marxist movement, we had organized a group which was trying to educate itself and to prepare for a time when we had to really participate in leadership in a new society. Our teachers were students from Vilna [Wilno] University and leaders in the illegal movement. They taught us economic and political science from a socialist perspective,

> and also the Russian language. … To establish the new rule, the Soviets needed to organize local political cadres, and people like me found themselves in demand as leaders. …
>
> With the establishment of the new rule, my friend, Isaac Rosenberg, who brought me into the Marxist movement, had become one of the top leaders in the regime and also sponsored my activities. When the tailor cooperative was organized, I became the manager of the cooperative. …
>
> Despite the political turmoil and economic hardships of the time, our family's life began to improve. I was paid a large salary and I found a job for my sister Yetta as the supply manager in the same organization. … I advanced higher in my political career and when the central bureau of city cooperatives was created, I became the chief of propaganda. At the same time I became active in the city party committee. …

Golderg maintains that his disenchantment with the regime started to set in in the winter of 1940, when the Soviets "began to conduct a reign of terror against the local populace." He nonetheless manoeuvred and adapted to the evolving situation, retaining his formal ties to the regime and informal ties to his community.

> First, during the night, portions of the Polish population of Pinsk started to disappear and were deported to Siberia. After that, came the deportations of Jewish people who were suspected of being members of socialist and Zionist organizations under the Polish rule. …
>
> My father's younger brother [Moishe Goldberg] was a very rich man, one of the few Jews who was active in the former Polish ruling party. Suddenly, Soviet security police were looking for him. … My father approached me to help hide my uncle, as he felt that I had the power to do this.
>
> At that time, I was seriously involved with Raizel, who was living at her uncle's home in Pinsk. *She found an apartment in her uncle's neighborhood which was formerly inhabited by a deported Polish family. She encouraged me to take this apartment, which was free from the government.* … When I moved to the apartment, my uncle came to live with me. Actually, he was hiding there and I provided all the necessities for him as he was afraid to leave the apartment. His family was meanwhile deported from Pinsk to some faraway village. This was part of the campaign to deport all of the (formerly) rich people from Pinsk. After hiding him for four months I helped my uncle escape to the town of Vilna, which had just become [part of] an independent Lithuanian republic. …
>
> After my uncle left my apartment, my girlfriend Raizel moved in with me. Our parents, with their beliefs, started to pressure us to get married. In October 1940, … At the home of Raizel's aunt was gathered the entire family, with a rabbi and a chupah. Thereafter a ritual Jewish wedding was performed.
>
> When I look back at that period of time, I can see that my personal life had improved radically. I had a high position in the political administration which paid much better than the average worker. My wife obtained a government office position. We had a nice apartment. … But I was not satisfied with my life because I started to detect more injustice in the new regime than in the previous ones. … Besides that, with my Jewish nationalistic outlook on life, I realized that this new regime would not bring salvation to the Jews. I found myself becoming assimilated into a society which had no place for Jewish culture. For someone who had been raised in a completely Jewish

> environment during the Polish rule, an environment filled with Jewish daily newspapers, magazines and other publications, and with theatrical productions which were renowned world wide, it seemed to me that thew was now no future for Jewish society.
>
> By the end of 1940, the local party administration came to the conclusion that it no longer needed the help of the local cadres. … Administrators from the original Soviet territories started to replace the local leaders, among whom I was one. At the time I had become very friendly with a couple from Leningrad who were in the highest party positions in the city. They were Jewish … The husband confided in me one day that he had been approached by Soviet security people who were quite interested in my background of Zionist activities under the Polish regime, and that I was in danger of being arrested. He advised me to resign from my position and to look for some less noticeable means of employment. … I achieved my resignation by stating reasons of poor health …
>
> In March 1941, with the heightening of international tensions, I was suddenly called up to join the armed forces.

Having spent the war years with the Soviet army, Goldberg—now an ardent Zionist again—decided to sever his ties with the Soviet Union and to take advantage of the possibility of "repatriating" to Poland. "Repatriation" was an option that Polish citizens of Jewish nationality who once cheered the Soviet invaders could access with few obstructions. For tens of thousands of them, Poland was just a stepping stone on the way to Palestine or the West. On the other hand, the majority of patriotic ethnic Poles who opted to move to Poland from eastern territories ceded to Soviet Belorussia and Soviet Lithuania were refused permission to do so by the Soviet authorities.

> I read in the Moscow official paper *Pravda* a communique about a treaty between the Soviet Union and the new Polish republic and the repatriation from the Soviet Union of former Polish citizens. This could give me a chance to free myself from the Russian army in which it appeared I might otherwise have to stay for a long time. By the same token, it would also get me out of Russia. I composed a letter requesting transfer to the Polish army because of my Polish citizenship and gave the request to my commanding officer to be forwarded to the higher authorities. …
>
> At the beginning of September 1945 Petya, Volodya and I got a pass for the first day of Rosh Hashanah to visit the city [of Galați, Romania]. After the Holy Days services, we went, as usual, to Leo's home … I met Bunya's brother, David … David turned out also to be part of the Bricha organization in which he played a big role. …
>
> We were informed by a general that we were going to be transferred to the Polish army. …
>
> During the months of December 1945 and January 1946 the Jewish population in Pinsk grew to the thousands, only to diminish thereafter when the mass exodus to Palestine by way of Poland commenced.

For personal reasons, however, Goldberg decided to remain the Soviet Union. Although he had a "stormy relationship" with a Russian woman who saved his life, he had broken up with her several times because she insisted on marriage, in his words, "although I had made clear to her several times that I would not

marry a non-Jewish woman." Indeed, he married a Jewish woman from Pińsk and did not leave the Soviet Union until the late-1950s when a smaller "repatriation" of former Polish citizens, again largely Jews, were allowed to leave the Soviet Union. Having made a full circle, Goldberg and his family arrived in Legnica, Poland, in October 1958. They soon obtained "a nice apartment, where for the first time in our lives we had a bathroom, running water and even gas." But he remained bitter because he "was taught by the Poles and later by the Russians to hate that land which had swallowed all my dearest people," who were actually murdered by the German invaders. Goldberg did not waste time in going to the Israeli Embassy in Warsaw to register for immigration to Israel, but decided to join his sister in America instead. He arrived in the United States in January 1961, settled in and became active in the Zionist movement.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Civilian Deportations

Most poignant of all are the accounts of the deportations, most often of entire families expelled from their homes on short notice and under harsh conditions, with the few possessions they could carry. The deportees were taken to nearby railway stations and loaded into cattle cars destined for labour camps and remote settlements in the far reaches of the Soviet Union. What remained of their property was often looted by local officials, many of whom had been their long-time neighbours.

The first large wave of deportations to the Gulag, in February 1940, which targeted mostly ethnic Poles, occurred almost two years before the Germans embarked on their "resettlement" of the Jews from the ghettos. The brunt of the ensuing misfortune was borne by the Polish population, an overall minority in this part of Poland, though Jews too, mostly refugees from the German zone, and to a lesser extent Ukrainians, Belorussians, and Lithuanians, were included in the later waves of deportations.

The deportations could take place only with the precise, advance identification of the targeted "political" and "class enemies," a task entrusted to local collaborators. As British historian Keith Sword has observed,

> The degree of organisation and planning necessary on the part of the Soviet authorities was considerable … Lists of the victims, their precise whereabouts and destinations had to be drawn up. So meticulous and precise was this preparation that cases are recorded of Poles being taken from prison to be reunited with their families at the railway station; also, children taken from school to be reunited with their parents at the station. Trusted personnel had to be mobilised to carry out the operations: the NKVD, local militias, the Army, and even trusted civilians were employed. Herschel Wajnrauch was a Soviet citizen—a journalist brought in to work on a Jewish newspaper in Białystok. He recalled: 'The Soviet police did not have enough people to carry out the mass arrests, so ordinary Soviet [i.e. local] citizens were used to help. Our newspaper was asked to provide two people, and I was one of them. We were given weapons and went with the Police to arrest these people and send them to Siberia.' The whole operation [i.e., the first mass deportation in February 1940 which included few non-Poles—*M.P.*] was carried out in such secrecy that it came as a complete surprise to most victims.

Historian Grzegorz Mazur has detailed the mechanics of the operation. At the county and township level, a threesome overseen by the NKVD, and which included local Communist Party secretaries, had the final say as to who was to be deported. The functionaries carrying out the arrests designated people from the local administration and party bodies to assist them. This action was in turn overseen by the party committee and administrative bodies at the regional level.

The role of local people serving in the militia and administration, in which Jews figured very prominently, was thus all-encompassing. Not only did they draw up lists of deportees, but they also arrested

them and helped to drive them out of their homes, which they often looted. They escorted the deportees to cattle cars assembled at train stations and guarded them as they were loaded into trains and dispatched on their long, harsh journey to remote destinations. The numerous accounts cited below corroborate this fully.

What is less known is the massive proportions of the misappropriation of property seized from the deportees and the outright thefts perpetrated by local officials during the course of deportations. This even resulted in the setting up of special commissions to investigate the widespread abuses, recover the stolen property, and punish the perpetrators. There is no evidence, however, that this undertaking met with success.

What transpired in the town of ***Boremel***, in Volhynia, was typical of virtually all the small towns in Eastern Poland. There too Jews and Ukrainians with red armbands had paved the way for Soviet rule by disarming the local Polish police in September 1939.

> The small town of Boremel counted about 3,000 inhabitants of which more than 2,000 were Jews. The remaining inhabitants consisted of Poles, Russians, Czechs and Ukrainians. After power was taken over by the Soviets, a local [Communist] Party committee was constituted whose national composition was uniform: Jewish. A lot depended on that direct authority: who would be deported, who would receive a favourable opinion, who would be finally classified one way or another.

Similar reports come from numerous other localities. In ***Beresteczko*** near Horochów, also in Volhynia,

> Poor Jews entered the Soviet administration and it is they who carried out the cleansing and deported people to Siberia by providing the NKVD with names of members of the Polish Legions, the families of officers, officials, judges and others. Ukrainian communists also joined the administration, but they displayed their hatred to a lesser degree and sometimes even warned people about their deportation.

Very often entire Polish settlements were brutally deported in the dead of winter:

> Suddenly, in the middle of the night, the surprised village was given a half an hour to get ready after which, in the bitter cold, the entire population was loaded on sleds, driven to the railroad, and packed onto trains. No one was spared. They took the elderly and the infants, the crippled and the imbeciles. Mothers who were giving birth were thrown out of their beds and told to climb on the sleds. They dragged those who were bed-ridden and paralyzed. In a village or settlement that had been slated for extinction no living soul had the right to remain. The livestock and inventory automatically became the property of the State … Foremost it was the purely Polish villages and colonies and the military settlements that were victimized.
>
> At that time they also deported all of the families of the foresters and gamekeepers and the remaining Polish intelligentsia who had been expelled from their manors and estates and were hiding in the villages and foresters' lodges. The militia which was employed to carry out this

cleansing consisted mainly of local Jews, Ukrainian communists, and the Soviet militia that had been brought in furtively from Kiev for that purpose.

At the time, a telling jingle made the rounds in ***Włodzimierz Wołyński***, in Volhynia, which captured the mood in the air and the new reality being witnessed on a daily basis:

Nasi Żydki sięgy tędy,
Wszystkie pójdą na urzędy,
Ukraińcy do kołchozu,
A Polaki do wywozu.

(Our Jews here and there,
Will all go into government offices,
The Ukrainians to the kolkhozes,
And the Poles will de deported.)

Though sudden and swift, undertaken at night to catch the deportees off guard, and well orchestrated, the deportations were not camouflaged in any way. The immediate surroundings became aware of them immediately and commotion spread as the convoys of Poles made their way through villages and towns to train stations in the depth of winter. Once the deportees were loaded into cattle cars, their clamour could be heard far and wide. Frozen bodies lay strewn along the roads and railroad tracks for all to behold. The following is a description from ***Ostrówek*** near Iwacewicze:

On February 10, 1940, in the middle of the night, a group of armed NKVD … men, together with the local militia, banged on our door. We were shoved against the wall and searched. All the holy ornaments had been ripped off our necks, thrown on the floor, trampled on, and thrown into the trash. Then they searched the room that we had been gathered up in and the rest of the premises. After the search had been completed, we were told that we had 15 minutes to leave the house. … Before the 15 minutes were up, we had been pushed out the door. …

As we entered the snow-covered courtyard, three sleighs harnessed with one horse to each waited for us. With each horse there was a man from Vierashki [Wieraszki was a neighbouring Ukrainian village—*M.P.*]. … NKVD men … pointing the rifles in our direction. My parents, Sabina, and Barbara had to walk beside our sleigh.

We were taken to the school where we met almost everybody from our community. The entire playground and the road to the Ostrovek village were covered with sleighs. After us, a few more families were brought in. …

At nightfall, a local man called out our names alphabetically. Each family left one by one, every member being checked. … As we stepped outside, our guards and drivers were waiting. …

From the time of the leaving of our homes, all the dogs in our little community had been howling. Cows were mooing and horses were neighing. It sounded as though a calamity had struck the earth ...

> It was about ten miles to the railway station. … Hungry, almost frozen, and exhausted to the limit, we arrived at the station. Seven-month pregnant Sabina walked all the way.
>
> On a side track, a freight train was standing. We were shoved inside. Some of our neighbors were in and lamenting. …
>
> The doors of the car had been shut and locked from outside. …
>
> The next night, more people had been brought in to our car. They were from Mihalin [Michalin], about five miles from us. …
>
> That night there was a bump, a jerk, and we were moving. … Someone had said that the Russians were going to take us into the forest and shoot us all. With that sort of statement, instant panic erupted. The women began to pray and cry, and the children followed. It turned into a gigantic beehive. … We began singing an evening hymn.

Similar descriptions of the deportations of February 10, 1940 abound. A railwayman in ***Smorgonie,*** in the Wilno region, recalled "the indescribable crying and wailing of mothers and children." In the colony of ***Dobra Wola*** in Polesia, as the people were driven away "only crying, the howling of dogs and shots here and there could be heard at the station." When the train left ***Krzemieniec*** loaded with deportees, "there was loud screaming and crying at the station."

Carriages carrying families, guarded by militiamen, converged on the train station in ***Husiatyn*** near the Soviet border. The station was surrounded by militiamen and the NKVD. "The picture was horrifying. Many children had frozen on the way to the station. The screaming of the mothers was so shrill that one could go mad … From those mothers who wanted to take their frozen-dead children into the wagons, the bodies were seized and thrown directly into the snow."

The bodies of children who froze on the way to the train station in ***Przemyśl*** were found by the roadside. The railroad joining ***Równe*** and ***Szepetówka (Szepietówka)*** was lined with frozen bodies, mostly children, discarded on the tracks by the guards. Similar scenes occurred in ***Białystok, Łomża,*** and ***Drohobycz.*** The Polish population who witnessed these cruel deeds was in a state of shock and stupor.

How did Jews react when their Polish neighbours were rounded up in full view and deported to the Gulag? Most Jewish memoirs are silent or dismissive about the first winter deportations, as if they didn't occur or were of no paricular significance. A case in point is Ejszyszki mentioned later. A few memoirs speak of the fate of the Poles but do not acknowledge that local Jews were involved in the deportations of their Polish neighbours in any way. When, they do, as in the case of Michel Mielnicki, noted earlier, it is the Polish victims of the deportation who are vilified: "We have to get rid of the fascists. They deserve to go to Siberia. They are not good for the Jewish people." Other testimonies, referred to later, are even more shocking in their callousness. How does one explain this widespread indifference toward and even rejoicing at the fate of one's neighbours? As we shall see, the attitude of the Jews toward their co-religionists who were deported was markedly different that toward the "other"—their Christian neighbours.

A Jew from ***Antopol*** near Kobryń, in Polesia, rationalized the fate of those deported to the Gulag from the perspective of later events:

> The new regime took to purging the atmosphere of reaction, kulaks, ideological and economic opposition, etc. Among others, recent Polish settlers were carried off to the interior of Russia. At night the military authorities informed the victims to dress and pack, and they were loaded on motor cars to be taken to an assembly center. … [When the Germans attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941] The Soviet authorities threw everything they had onto the vehicles and rushed away, promising they would return. … We now envied the kulaks who had been forcibly deported to the land beyond the Volga. They were sure of their lives.

Miriam Berger, who witnessed the deportations in ***Horochów***, Volhynia, is one of the exceptional few who was truly moved by the plight of the Polish deportees:

> It was at this time that the N.K.V.D. began its operations. Numerous vehicles were commandeered from the nearby villages and were used to transport Poles who had settled in the town to the railway. Those deported were allowed to take with them only as much of their belongings as could be packed in half an hour, and on reaching the railway cars were packed into wagons which took them away to work in Siberia. … A few weeks later N.K.V.D. men reappeared with their vehicles and this time took away the families of Polish officers who had reached the town during the retreat of the Polish Army. It was the depths of winter and the journey to Siberia lasted several weeks. We heard that many children and old people could not stand the terrible hardships and died before reaching their destination. … It was now the turn of the Kulaks, the rich peasants. Thousands of them, with their families were expelled … Among them were old people who begged to be allowed to die in their homes, but their pleas fell on deaf ears.

A similar sense of compassion, this time for fellow victims, was displayed by a young Jewish girl who was deported from ***Wilno,*** along with her family, wealthy industrialists, in the last wave of deportations of June 1941. This was her recollection of what she witnessed upon arrival at the train station from where she was shipped to the Gulag:

> Ahead of us the cattle cars were waiting for their human cargo. … What I saw only added to my bewilderment … I saw nothing more villainous than peasants—women in shawls, men in cotton jackets and trousers that ressembled riding breeches. I saw Polish peasants, not a rich capitalist among them; yanked from their land, they had toted their belongings in sacks, in shawls, in cardboard boxes. I saw reflected in their stricken faces our mutual shock.

A young Jewish "idealist" from ***Włodzimierz Wołyński,*** who found the arrest of Polish officials, military personnel and clergy "logical and necessary" because of their "strong anti-Soviet and anti-Communist sentiments," began to have second thoughts when the Soviets started to victimize his parents' middle-class Jewish friends and acquaintances.

In late November [1939], however, I became troubled by stories about the brutal treatment of local citizens during night searches and arrests. These operations usually focused on landowners and merchants, many of whom I had known since childhood and whose honesty and integrity had never been questioned. …

I hadn't realized that the city council officials, all of whom I knew and thought were my friends, considered my parents capitalists and therefore *vragi naroda* ["enemies of the people"]. I couldn't believe that they would take forcefully take my father's property and my parents' valuables. …

I followed Dmitri's advice not to ask any more questions and not to plead on behalf of my parents and their friends, and I immersed myself even more in political activity, hoping my devotion would save my parents from trouble. I stood up on the platform at meetings and enthusiastically gave reports. I was delegated to participate daily in local gatherings and eventually was nominated to be a designated speaker at the meetings required for all citizens. At these meetings, designed for the "political education of the masses," I presented and analyzed political and military events and explained the role of the Red Army, which was to save the eastern part of Poland from the capitalists by incorporating it into Ukraine. [Bardach was vice-chairman of the municipal election committee who agitated for the annexation of Eastern Poland into the Soviet Union.] …

During the first week of December a curfew was imposed on the city. An increased number of soldiers patrolled the streets, and rumors spread that dozens of cattle cars were arriving at the train station. I went with my friends to the station to see what was going on. Red boxcars were lined up by the hundreds and hooked to coal-burning locomotives. Their presence indicated that deportations were being planned, but no one knew exactly when they would take place or who would be deported. …

Late in the afternoon on December 5, Yuri Savchenko came to my house, out of breath, and told me that mass arrests and deportations would take place late that night. He thought my parents might be on the list. [Bardach immediately rushed off to warn his parents and family and friends. He was then taken by the NKVD as a *portnoi,* a civilian witness, to assist and witness the searches and arrests.] …

Andrei handed me the list. I recognized many names—friends of mine and of my parents. I flipped to the second page and froze "Shimon Stern—4." Taubcia's father. My father's name was also on the list, but for some reason it had been crossed off. Perhaps I would be able to scratch off other names when no one was looking. …

As we got closer to the train station, shouting, wailing, and crying pierced the air, punctuated by gruff Russian commands. Hundreds of deportees were gathered on the plaza and guarded by soldiers. Several trucks were parked on the circle in front of the station, a place usually reserved for carriages. We pulled up behind the last truck and watched those ahead of us unload. Soldiers with bayonets surrounded the trucks, taking every opportunity to threaten, kick, shove, and swear at the captives.

This "idealist" also describes how ordinary Poles put their lives at risk for their Jewish employers who were slated for deportation and died in a Gestapo-like execution—an occurrence for which no Jewish counterpart has been found (though examples of Jews assisting Poles have been meticulously noted later on).

We drove halfway down Kowelska Street and stopped in front of one of the newest houses, that belonging to Dr. Schechter. His children, Dalek and Marusia, were close friends of mine. Gennady's mouth gaped open when he saw the magnificent facade. …

Gennady ordered Andrei to break down the door, and after several blows with the crowbar the handle broke. … He was determined to find the Schechter family.

In the backyard there was a large brick barn. The gardener, his wife, and the night watchman lived in the three attached rooms, and Gennady thought the Schechters might be hiding there. [In fact they were hiding in an underground shelter in the nearby orchard.] He pounded on the wooden door until the gardener and his wife, dressed in nightclothes, answered.

"Where's the Schechter family?"

"They're at home," the gardener murmured.

His soft, sleepy reply further angered Gennady. "You son of a whore!" He grabbed the gardener by his nightshirt and pulled him close. "Find them or I'll kill you!" Spit sprayed in the gadener's face. Gennady pulled the gardener outside and threw him on the ground. The man stood up, wiped the spit off his face, and ran toward the house.

The gardener's wife began to wail. "Holy Mary! Holy Jesus! Please, I beg you, leave us in peace. Oh God! Holy Mary! Save us!" This was too much for Gennady. Although he barely understood Polish, he understood her religious invocation.

He grabbed her by the robe, which opened, exposing her breasts. "Filthy whore. I'll teach you a lesson." He began to kiss and fondle the woman. Her screams pierced my heart.

The gardener came running back to the barn. "Sir, please stop. Leave my wife alone. I'll do whatever you want, but please, leave her alone!"

"Did you bring your master and his family?" Gennady shouted.

"I don't know where the Schechter family is. I went through the entire house and checked the backyard. I couldn't find them anywhere." [Obviously, the gardener could not have done all that in the short interval; more importantly, he did not disclose the existence of the secret shelter.—*MP*] He had barely finished the sentence when Gennady punched him in the face.

The gardener's nose bled profusely. He put both hands to his face, still pleading with Gennady to leave his wife alone.

Gennady let go of the woman. "Liar!" he said. He pointed his pistol at the man's face and fired. The gardener's wife jumped on Gennady scratching him. He flung her to the ground and drew his pistol.

The night watchman appeared, and when he saw the gun pointed at the woman, he ran up to Gennady and pushed him, throwing him off balance. Kostia and Andrei cocked their pistols, ready to shoot, when Gennady shouted, "Leave him for me! I'll teach him what it means to attack an officer of the NKVD. He's going to lick my boots and beg to die quickly." Gennady smashed the pistol across his face and tried to kick him in the groin but missed, landing his foot on the watchman's stomach. The watchman doubled forward. Gennady smashed the pistol on the back of his head. …

The watchman's face had puffed. His eyes were closed, his nose was bleeding, and his upper lip was split in half. Gennady straightened up and backed away from him. He looked exhausted, and I

> thought he had finished, but then he lunged at the watchman again, grabbed him by both ears, and tore them out. Blood spurted onto the ground. …
>
> As Gennady started to kick the watchman again … Kostia and Andrei were dragging the gardener's wife into a corner. She screamed and twisted, trying to free her limbs. Andrei pinned down her arms while Kostia spread her legs. She screamed wildly, and Kostia slapped her across the face and cursed. When Gennady stumbled over, Kostia got up and pulled up his pants.
>
> "How was it?" Gennady asked. "Did you give her a good Russian fuck?"
>
> He breathed hard. "The bitch loved it."
>
> "Is she still alive?"
>
> "I think so. You go next, boss." But Andrei was already on top of her.
>
> Gennady took two big swigs of vodka, then handed what little was left to Kostia. They both laughed wildly and slurred obscenities while Andrei raped the woman. She didn't scream anymore, and I didn't think she was moving. …
>
> I slipped outside and walked around in the cold air. A few minutes later, I heard two more shots.

A Jewish doctor, who spent the Soviet occupation in home town of ***Podhajce*** and the nearby town of ***Tłuste***, somehow managed to turn a blind eye to the fate of Polish officials and military personnel arrested in September and October 1939, but pitied the Polish settlers who were deported in February 1940, and *some* of the later deportees.

> And when the deportations to Russia began, they first deported the Polish settlers, then the families of officials and military personnel, afterwards the *bezhentsy*, that is the refugees from the west [i.e., German-occupied Poland], and then at the very end some Ukrainian nationalists. They should have started with the last group, and not with the hard-working settlers who were not in anyone's way—only in the way of the Ukrainian nationalists, who saw to it that they were deported in order to increase their chances for an independent Ukraine. With the utmost ruthlessness, and without taking into account the weather or a person's state of health, even in the depth of winter, they transported these unfortunate people under guard. Among them were pregnant women, just about to give birth, and also those who had just given birth. They were packed into freight trains like cattle and shipped into exile in a strange, cold country.

For the most part, however, as many accounts illustrate, Jews were largely indifferent to the fate of the Poles and even profited from their misfortune. Many Jews lined the streets to rejoice at the scenes of their Polish neighbours being shipped off to the Gulag and mocked these destitute masses. Such "spectacles" became a popular form of entertainment.

When the Poles were being deported from ***Zambrów*** near Łomża, the Jews who gathered to watch the spectacle laughed merrily: "The Poles are going on a pilgrimage to Częstochowa," they mocked. (The shrine of the Black Madonna on Jasna Góra in Częstochowa was Poland's most revered shrine and a place of pilgrimage.)

In ***Lubieszów***, in Polesia, Jews took part in the arrest and deportation of Polish settlers consisting of ex-servicemen and their families to Siberia in February 1940. As the Poles were led to the train station to be loaded into cattle cars in the depth of winter Jewish townspeople gathered around and applauded.

When later deportations engulfed many Jews as well (in the more benign climactic conditions of the summer of 1940), the reaction of the local Jewish population was markedly different from the send-off accorded to their Polish neighbours in the winter of 1940. For Jewish victims they did exhibit a sense of brotherhood. They would bring food to these unfortunate Jews, mostly refugees from the German zone, who were being deported with the assistance of local Jewish communists; sometimes they would even attempt to hide endangered Jews. According to one account,

> Hundreds of Luboml Jews came to the [train] station to see their "refugees" off, for each had become used to his own refugee. At that moment the kind-heartedness of the people of Luboml became apparent, for these people, despite their own difficulties, have given us their help, either with a kind word or with beds for the homeless and packages of food.

The litany of Polish accounts attesting to Jewish complicity in the deportations of the civilian population is long and sad. Already in October 1939, which Polish historian Daniel Boćkowski considers to be the first wave of deportations, the newly appointed village council and militia in ***Białozórka*** near Krzemieniec, in which many local Jews served, ordered and carried out the deportation of Polish settlers. In that early period, the settlers were given a generous three days' notice of their expulsion and allowed to take only one cow and those belongings that would fit on a carriage.

At a public meeting organized by the NKVD in the village market square, an agitated crowd of Jews and Ukrainians gathered calling for the deportation of the Polish "leeches." Accompanied by the militia, Jews went from house to house making inventories of agricultural produce and livestock to be taken over by the council. The contempt that some of these Jews displayed toward their Polish neighbours with whom they had traded and lived amicably before the occupation was baffling for the Poles. Polish school children also felt the wrath of their new Jewish teacher, Fejga Baszer, who subjected them to differential treatment unknown at their school before the war.

A Polish woman whose husband had been deported from ***Stanisławów*** in October 1939 recalled how, in April of the following year, she was taken from her home in the middle of the night together with her four young children and deported to Siberia. The Soviet soldier who came for her was, as in very many such cases, accompanied by a local Jew. Earlier, this Polish woman had been urged by an unknown Jewish woman to sell her furniture to her because she would soon have no need for it.

> I remember well the date October 26, 1939 because my husband, who had been condemned to death, managed to yell out through a window in his train wagon which was wired shut: "My dearest wife, hope for the best, I'll be back soon." Those were the last words heard from the lips of my dear husband and father of four children (10, 8, 4 and 1½ years old). … I asked a Jew I knew, a Polish citizen, what should I do, who should I turn to to get my husband out of jail? … "We are in charge

now, and you want them to be released? No, they won't be released, they're taking them to Tyśmienica," he replied. "What will they do there?" I asked. The Jew answered: "A bullet in the skull—you don't want that?" I stood nailed to the ground. Seeing that this had hurt me badly, he sneered and walked away. …

After my husband had been deported, one day a middle-aged Jewish woman came by and asked: "Do you have any furniture to sell?" "No I don't," I replied. … "You're making a mistake because soon you won't need it." … Eventually, I had to sell some of my furniture … to the wife of a Soviet prosecutor. … [Several weeks later she went to his home to collect the rest of the money owed for the furniture.] … He sat at the table and his first words were why did I sell the furniture? I told him it was because you have taken my husband … He listened and then said, "Don't blame us. Your people insisted on it." "Our people?" I said in an astonished voice. "Yes, it was your Jews who insisted on it. If you don't believe me, go to the court and you'll see who is standing by the door to the Grievance Chamber." …

The third transport was for us women with children, the wives of the men who had already been deported. On April 13, 1940, at one o'clock at night, two people came: a Soviet soldier with a rifle over his shoulder and a somewhat older Jew, his interpreter, whose hat covered his eyes. "So do you have a weapon?" asked the Soviet. "No, I don't." Just to be sure I was told to stand by the wall and not move. First they searched the room where the children were sleeping. They awoke and started to cry … They looked through all the drawers throwing the contents onto the floor. … Finally, they said, "Let's go. You have a half hour to get ready. We're waiting for you." My parents did not live far away and they helped me gather together the things I needed most … The Soviet and Jew looked on and said, "What's left belongs to the Soviet government."

In ***Bybło*** and the surrounding villages, in the county of Rohatyn, local Jews and Ukrainians denounced Poles, who were then arrested by the NKVD and deported. A similar fate met Polish residents of ***Kosów Huculski, Kuty Tyśmienica, Stryj, Budzanów, Rudki, Komarno, Biłka Szlachecka, Załoziec, Sasów,*** and ***Śniatyn***.

The deportations conducted in the extremely harsh conditions of February 1940 stand out for their cruelty. The following scene was witnessed in ***Deraźne*** near Kostopol, in Volhynia:

The winter of 1940 was very frosty … The Polish population is being deported ever more frequently: 'kulaks,' former Polish civil servants, teachers, the intelligentsia, gamekeepers, colonists, foresters, etc. They are driven daily to the train station in an endless procession of carriages. People freeze … they can only take with them their clothes, a small sack, and a little food. The transports are guarded on both sides by NKVD soldiers. One cannot approach these people or pass them some warm food or clothes—they are treated by the Russians like the plague. The Ukrainians and Jews do not hide their joy and denounce whomever else they feel should be deported. We already know that some of the people detained by the NKVD are shot, but no one knows where.

In ***Huta Stepańska*** near Kostopol, in Volhynia, a militia consisting of Ukrainian and Jewish riff-raff arrested local officials and handed them over to the Soviets. A pack of militiamen descended on the rectory of the Catholic church and seized the elderly parents of the pastor, Rev. Czaban, who were around 80 years of age, pious and well-respected in the community. They were shoved around and mocked, and then loaded on a carriage. They perished in exile in Kamchatka.

In ***Białozórka*** near Krzemieniec, entire Polish families were rounded up on February 10, 1940, permitted to take only a few possessions, and assembled at the local school. The NKVD officer who oversaw the operation was accompanied by Ukrainians from the local police and the secretary of the heavily Jewish village council. From there the Poles were taken by sled over snow-covered roads to the railway station in Maksymówka, where they were loaded into crowded cattle cars.

In the colony of ***Bajonówka*** near Tuczyn, in the county of Równe, on February 10, 1940, at four o'clock in the morning, Polish settlers were brutally awoken by the NKVD and local Jewish communists and informed of their deportation. They were given one hour to pack some belongings, transported to the train station in Zdołbunów, and packed into cattle cars whose doors were then bolted shut. The bunk beds in the wagons were overcrowded with passengers. The next night the train set off for the Soviet interior.

In the village of ***Wola Ostrowiecka*** near Luboml, the home of a Polish state gamekeeper was surrounded on February 10, 1940, by the NKVD and local Jews in their service. While the house was searched its inhabitants were forced against the wall with their hands raised. They were told they would be resettled in a different region and given two hours to pack whatever belongings they could carry. They were put on sleighs and taken to the train station in Luboml, where they were loaded into freight wagons. From there they set off on a two-month journey to their unknown destination in the Arkhangelsk region of northern Russia.

Fortune smiled on a Polish family in ***Rożyszcze***, who were warned by some friendly Jews that they would soon be deported to the Soviet interior. They were also told the name of the Jew who had seen to it that they were placed on the list of deportees.

In ***Gwoździec***, a small town near Kołomyja:

> Then came the unusually snowy and harsh winter of 1939–1940, and with it the tragic dawn of February 10, 1940, when entire Polish families, including children and the elderly, were loaded into cattle cars. Order was maintained by local Jews and Ukrainians who not so long ago constituted, or so it seemed, a friendly contingent of our township community.

A long list of the Polish families affected by the deportation follows.

In ***Horodenka***, also in Stanisławów voivodship, from which more than 220 Poles—mostly women and children—were deported in February 1940, local Ukrainians and Jews continued to denounce Polish officers and policemen who remained in hiding. One of them was a former police commissioner by the name of Bryl, who perished in Siberia.

In ***Bogdanówka*** near Zborów, the list of deportees was compiled by local Communist officials, all of them apparently recent converts to the cause, from among the tiny group of some ten Jews who lived in this Polish-Ukrainian village. Basia Szapiro headed the Communist Party, her son-in-law by the name of Lipszyc became the secretary of the township, the horse trader Josz Pinkas assumed the position of the Red Militia within days of the Soviet entry, and two other Jews rounded out the new organs of authority. On February 10, 1940, three Russian soldiers accompanied by Josz Pinkas, the armed militiaman, descended on the homes of the Świrski and Gierc families, well-to-do farmers, and arrested the eight members of these two Polish families. The Świrski family, consisting of parents and two teenage sons, was awoken at three o'clock in the morning and given a half hour to pack. When asked what the charges were, a document was produced and read: Mr. Świrski had fought in General Józef Haller's Army and against Soviet Russia in 1920, Mrs. Świrska was active in the community as a women's organizer, and the sons had committed political transgressions of their own. In brief, these trumped up charges could only have been concocted by local people who were quite familiar with their neighbours' affairs. When asked where they were being sent, Pinkas replied: "To polar bear country." The two Polish families were driven by cattle-drawn carriages to the train station in Jezierna, some five kilometres away. In total, some 92 Poles from surrounding villages were loaded into a cattle car that left the station late that night. By the time it arrived at its destination in Komi on March 29, six of the passengers had died.

In ***Hermanów*** near Biłka Szlachecka, not far from Lwów, Maria Karpa recalled how she and her family were driven from their home:

> On the tenth of February [1940], a Saturday, at five thirty in the morning, there came seven Soviets armed with rifles, two men from the Ukrainian militia and five Jews, who were also armed. There were six of us in our family, and they were fifteen armed men. One of the seven Soviets read an official order which was like a death sentence. We were given fifteen minutes to get ourselves and our children together. We didn't have enough time to get ready and were fearful of what would happen to us, so we were only half dressed. We were not allowed to take anything at all. It was only about a kilometre to our train station, yet they took us to the station in Winniki, fourteen kilometres away. We stood all day inside freight wagons—it was like [being] in a shed because they were not heated. At night they transported us to Lwów where we stayed for another whole day. When our family found out that we were taken from our home under guard without being allowed to take anything with us, they brought us some food. The Soviets and Jews did not want to allow our parents to come close to the wagons, so we started screaming and crying and jumped out of the wagons not paying attention to the guards because it didn't matter to us any more. We only wanted to get some food for our children. The next night they left Lwów with us. There were 58 people in this wagon.

On February 10, 1940, several Jews burst into the home of eight-year-old Jerzy Biesiadowski in ***Lwów*** and gave the family ten minutes to pack.

> I put on my coat and fur hat, but only managed to put on one shoe when I was kicked by a Jew. As I slid across the floor on my stomach I grabbed the other shoe, but the Jew tore it out of my hand and threw it in a corner. I was thus forced, wearing one slipper, out into the snow with my mother. We were packed into cattle cars for deportation in –40ºC weather. Many people froze. The guards opened the doors and asked, "Who croaked?"

The owners of an estate in ***Hurnowicze*** near Mołodeczno, were deported to Siberia in 1940 and 1941. The NKVD was assisted by a Jew by the name of Sejzer, who had leased a mill belonging to this Polish family. In ***Kleck***, in Nieśwież county, many Jews worked for the NKVD and denunciations of Poles became frequent.

At four o'clock in the morning, on February 10, 1940, local communists in the company of the NKVD descended on the homes of Polish settlers in ***Kuchczyce,*** robbed them of their valuables, and gave them two hours to pack what they could carry. (Earlier these same officials had compiled a thorough census of all the settlers and an inventory of their property and belongings.) Under guard, in a temperature of -20°C, entire families were taken by carriage to the train station in Rejtanów. In Baranowicze they were transferred onto wide-track cattle cars with bunk beds and a small stove, but lacking in any sanitary facilities. The wagon was cold as there was often no wood and instead of water a bucket was filled with snow. The food ration consisted of salted herring. Those who died en route to Arkhangelsk were thrown out of the moving train onto the snow.

In ***Sopoćkinie*** near Grodno, according to a Jewish source, during the day local Jews "were invited to come to the N.K.V.D. (secret police)." That night, February 10, 1940, they accompanied Soviet soldiers to the homes of the villagers to announce and oversee "their forced exile deep into central Russia. Hundreds of peasant families were led to their banishment in bitter cold together with their infants."

Jan Koniecko, of the village of ***Netta Folwark*** near Augustów, recalled how, on February 10, 1940, a Jewish policeman with an armband, whom his family knew well because they had traded with him before the war, brought some Soviets to his home. They struck his father in the back with the butt of a rifle and made him kneel with his arms raised. His mother and sister frantically packed a few things together and the family was deported to Irkutsk. Other Jews whom they knew went to other Polish houses.

In ***Brańsk***, deportations were dependent on lists drawn up with the assistance of local collaborators and communists, mainly Jews. The "crimes" of those slated for deportation had to be "confirmed" by two residents. Eighty-five percent of those deported were ethnic Poles despite the fact that they constituted just half of the town's population.

> The first deportation of Poles to Siberia took place on February 10, 1940. There were three more transports. In total 114 persons, mostly Poles, were deported. A dozen or so Jews and members of other nationalities were also exiled. The fate of some of those who got arrested is still unknown. While in Israel, I was told of the tragic case of a Jewish policeman who came with the Soviets to take his own brother and participated in his deportation to Siberia. Not a single case is known of a Jew standing up for, or in any way helping a Pole by warning him or keeping him hidden from

capture. On the contrary, some of them even participated in deporting the elderly, women, and children to Siberia. Cultural differences and earlier economic discords let themselves be felt. After the war, only 50 from among the 114 exiled to Siberia and Kazakhstan returned to Brańsk.

Many eyewitnesses from ***Jedwabne*** near Łomża, both Jews and Poles, attest to particularly deplorable behaviour on the part of local Jews. Arrests started soon after the Soviet entry. Pro-Soviet Jews not only fingered and denounced Poles, but also eagerly participated in their arrest, round-up and deportation to the Gulag. Rev. Marian Szumowski, the Catholic pastor, was arrested by a local Jew in the service of the NKVD and was sent to prison in Minsk, Belorussia, where he was sentenced to death on January 27, 1941. In total, several hundred Poles, and perhaps a dozen Jews, were deported to the Soviet interior from Jedwabne and its surroundings.

Meir Grajewski (later Ronen), a native of Jedwabne, has identified five "scoundrels," otherwise for the most part rather ordinary members of the town's Jewish community, who denounced their Polish neighbours and, occasionally, fellow Jews.

During the Soviet occupation five Jewish scoundrels domineered (in the town).

The first, Eli [Eliasz] Krawiecki … had a shoe repair shop … He was the most intelligent of them … Under the Soviets he did not officially fulfil any function, but directed everything from behind the scenes. He was killed later [after the Soviets retreated in June 1941] …

Chaim Kosacki, whose father was a butcher … When the Germans arrived, some Poles took him to the them and they [the Germans] shot him that same day.

Abraham Dawid Kubrzański …

Szajn Binsztejn, who sat in the "Czerwoniak" prison before the war for three years for raping a girl. He was a real bandit. In the synagogue he could only stand behind the stove and could only be part of the minyan of ten men needed for prayer service when there was no one else.

Mechajkał Wajnsztajn [was] the only one of the five who was alive after the war.

They ruled the town for the first weeks before Soviet power stabilized. Their chief was a Pole named Krystofczyk, a true Communist. Krystofczyk became the chairman of the town hall, and Binsztejn was the commander of the police.

… It is true that they denounced Poles. …

The Soviets started to make lists and arrest people. Mostly they arrested Poles.

Meir Grajewski's father, Symcha Grajewski, who had been a Polish legionnaire and fought for Poland in the Polish-Soviet War of 1919–1920, was arrested on December 10, 1939. He was imprisoned in Łomża and never heard from again. In March 1940, Meir, then 14 years old, and his mother were deported to Kazakhstan together with four Polish families from Jedwabne, after being denounced by Mechajkał Wajnsztajn (or possibly another Jew).

There are numerous credible testimonies recorded by Poles that describe other local "scoundrels" (the Chilewski brothers, the Lewinowicz brothers, Berek Czapnicki, Ajzyk Jedwabiński and his sons, Lejb Guzowski, Jakow Kac) and expand on the consequences of their misdeeds for the Polish population.

The Jews greeted the Soviets with flowers. … The Jews formed a citizens' militia and many of them were employed by the NKVD. After the Soviet authority was fully organized the Jews drew up lists of Poles to be deported to Siberia. … At first they arrested a number of people from the intelligentsia, that is, teachers, officials, merchants, wealthier farmers and Rev. Marian Szumowski. … When the NKVD called on their homes several people were away… These individuals started to hide and organized a resistance movement. After a while the Jews tracked them down and the NKVD arrested them. All traces of them vanished. Only Dr. Jerzy Kowalczyk returned.

The Red army was welcomed by the Jews, who erected gates for them. The former authorities were replaced with local Jews and Communists. The police and teachers were arrested. … Searches took place at the homes of the wealthier farmers. They seized their furniture, clothing and valuables, and in a few days they came to arrest them at night.

As soon as the Soviet army arrived a town committee sprang up spontaneously…its members were Jews. The militia was also composed of Jewish Communists. There were no repressions at first because they [the Soviets] did not know the population. Arrests started only after local Communists had made their denunciations. Searches [for weapons] were carried out by local militiamen…

The Soviet authorities set up a militia which consisted mostly of Jewish Communists. They started to arrest…those whom the police laid complaints against. … The local [Polish] population for the most part boycotted the voting [on October 22, 1939]. Throughout the entire day the militia, brandishing their rifles, compelled them to come to the polling station. The sick were bought by force. Soon after the elections they staged a raid and arrested entire families who were deported to the Soviet Union.

When the Russians came into Jedwabne, the Jews handed over lists of all the Polish intellectuals. The Russians rounded them up, took them to Russia, and executed them.

When the Russians entered they did not have to seek out trouble-making Poles. [The Jews] handed over many people to the NKVD who were then shipped to Siberia. The Jews informed them who lived where and what they did. My father was also denounced, and I know exactly who did it. My father worked in a sawmill owned by a Jew. The Russians came looking for weapons. My father had one, so they arrested him and shipped him to Russia, to Arkhangelsk. I never saw him again.

On October 20, 1939, a Soviet and three Jewish neighbours—Janowicz (their baker), Chilewski, and a third Jew whose name is not known—came for Franciszek Ksawery Wąsowski, a retired police officer. They arrived in a motor vehicle, arrested Wąsowski, and took him to the jail in Łomża. After officials came to register the remaining members of the Wąsowski family in March 1940, they received a warning from a Jewish woman, who had heard (likely from other Jews in the service of the Soviets) that the families who had been recorded would be deported to Siberia. Mrs.

Wąsowska and her daughter Jadwiga hid out for over a year in the villages outside Jedwabne and thus avoided arrest. Mr. Wąsowski was never seen again.

At the end of April 1940 a local Jew arrived at our home in the uniform of a Russian militiaman and told my father to report to the NKVD. …my mother followed that policeman to check who else he went for because there were more than a dozen names written on his list.

At the beginning of the war a cousin, the wife of a policeman from Krynki, was staying with my husband's family together with her 12-year-old son. When the Russians arrived they went from house to house to look for Poles to deport to Siberia. When they asked who the boy was, my husband's brother said that it was his son. At this their Jewish neighbour, Chilewski, (whose brother ran around the square with a red flag), spoke out: "Take him away, he's the son of a [Polish] policeman."

Before the war when the police arrested the four sons of Zelman Lewinowicz, their father begged my grandfather and father to vouch for them that they were not Communists. And so they did [unwittingly making a false statement—*M.P.*]. And in return, under the Soviet occupation when Poles were being shipped out to Siberia, Lewinowicz's wife told my father: "Don't be afraid, Bronek, we won't take you." Why did she say that? Because Jews accompanied the Russians to capture Poles. They were armed with rifles and looked for Poles in the villages.

Franciszek Karwowski…witnessed a chase after his acquaintance Szymborski who was fleeing from Jedwabne. He was pursued by two Jews from Jedwabne on horses. They wore red armbands and had rifles in their hands. They put their weapons to good use.

After the Red Army entered…many people were arrested at the instigation of Jewish Communists… The day of the election, on March 31, 1940, at Easter time, the NKVD was in action. We were not allowed to go to church until we cast our votes. They called out our names as we walked by and we were handed a marked ballot to throw in the box. The agitators and denouncers were local Jews. Patrols armed with rifles walked about the streets. The population remained passive in the face of this threat. So ended the elections of the deputies. …

Searches took place at the larger farms and furniture, clothing and valuables were confiscated. People were taken to meetings by force. … The committees were composed of military men, Jews and local Communists.

The Jews armed themselves and entered the NKVD en masse. Arrests and deportations of the Polish population to Siberia ensued. The first transport left in December 1939. Among those arrested were priests, soldiers, and the well-to-do, who were called 'kulaks'—the Polish bourgeoisie. The temperature fell to minus 40°C. In this frost people were put on sleighs and driven to the train in Łomża. There they were loaded into freight wagons like cattle. The Jews began to hit them with the butts of their rifles to hurry up the cargo because they were cold. … An old Jewish woman by the name of Kuropatwa [whose son was also deported for providing clothes to a Polish

> pilot on the run from the Soviets] came to our home and reported that the Jewish Communists were helping the NKVD ship Polish families off to Siberia. The daughters of Mrs. Kuropatwa, Pesa and Chaja, stood and cried at that terrible sight of the savagery into which Jews and the NKVD had fallen. … The Poles lived in fear.

The vileness of these deeds was readily apparent to everyone. The bodies of children who froze on the way to the railway station in Łomża were strewn on the road. But the deportations continued unabated.

> I remember when the Poles were being carted off to Siberia. On each wagon there was a Jew with a rifle. Mothers, wives and children were kneeling down before the wagons begging for mercy and help. The last such transport left the 21st of June 1941.

The wife of the local Polish police commander Wacław Wawernia returned to Jedwabne with her two daughters after the Soviet entry in September 1939, only to find their home and possessions taken over by a Jewish family who threatened to have them arrested if they did not leave. They were eventually deported to the Gulag on June 20, 1941, having been denounced by local Jews as enemies of the people.

The Żelazny family were also among the last Polish families to be deported. Genowefa Malczyńska recalled the arrival of the NKVD on June 20, 1941: "They knocked on our house at one thirty at night. Two NKVD officials and two Jews from Jedwabne. My mother got up and opened the door, and they took out a long list and said: 'Get ready, hostess.' They told my grandfather to fetch the horse from the meadow and harness him. I and my sisters started to cry." Genowefa's mother, who knew Russian, asked the NKVD official where he was from. When he replied "from near Moscow" she asked him how was it that he had such detailed information. The NKVD official answered: "Your own Jews denounced you." The Żelazny family were transported to the market square where they sat on a wagon until noon, guarded by a Jew with a rifle. Wagons full of Poles arrived from neighbouring villages and once assembled, they set out for Łomża under the guard of NKVD officials and a Jew. Cattle cars awaited them there. The Żelazny family returned to Poland five years later, in 1946, without the grandfather and Genowefa's brother, both of whom had died in exile of disease and starvation.

Similar conditions prevailed in the entire region. According to a report from vicinity of Jedwabne,

> Before every arrest [in the outlying village of Makowskie], which took place only at night, there arrived a few soldiers and the local militia, composed mostly of our own Jews. They surrounded the house of the person they came to arrest. A few of them entered the home and ordered him to lie on the floor. One of them held a gun to his head and the remaining carried out a thorough search, taking all documents, photographs and papers bearing seals.

There is no mention whatsoever of any of this in the Jedwabne memorial book—a strong indication that the Jews of Jedwabne did not, by and large, regard the Polish residents of their town as their neighbours.

An eyewitness from ***Radziłów,*** a nearby village, reported a similar state of affairs. There too the Jews came out in large numbers to greet the Soviet invaders for whom they had erected two triumphal gates. Apart from two Soviet commandants, the entire militia and administration was in the hands of local Jews. Local collaborators drew up lists of "enemies of the people" and Jewish militiamen, armed with rifles, executed the deportations together with Soviet officials. Entire Polish families were transported to nearby railway stations in the middle of winter 1940. When a Pole tried to rescue two Polish women from deportation in April 1940, a young local Jewish collaborator named Dora Dorogoj and a Jew from the NKVD named Milberg stood in the way and had the Pole arrested.

The second large wave of deportations came on April 13, 1940, and again affected mostly Poles. In the early morning hours, teams composed of NKVD functionaries, NKVD convoy soldiers, and members of the local militia swarmed through ***Lwów*** seizing more than 7,000 people whose names had been carefully put on lists prepared in advance of this sweep. The deportees were given a short time to pack whatever belongings they could carry before being loaded on trucks and dispatched to train stations where they were locked up in freight wagons. Family members who tried to bring food and clothing to the wagons were brutally chased away. During the searches of the deportees' homes valuables were often stolen by the NKVD personnel and local militiamen. What remained was auctioned off for a pittance to state officials and clerks.

A typical account from Lwów reads:

> Unexpectedly, the night of April 13, 1940, intruders came into our home: a member of the NKVD dressed in a black uniform, a young Red Army soldier, and a policeman—a Polish Jew who was the worst of the lot because he began to steal at once. After a search of our home we were evacuated. In the course of 15 minutes we lost everything: our own house, fine furniture, a piano, a wonderful library. Valuable leather-bound books with gold lettering were thrown on the floor and stepped on and kicked about by our executioners who deported us unlawfully into the depths of the Soviet Union.

The wife and three young children of Stanisław Pawulski, a Polish officer who was imprisoned in Starobelsk, were also deported that night (April 13, 1940) from their apartment on Ziemiałkowskiego Street in Lwów. During the half hour that they were given to pack one of the eight pro-Soviet Jewish refugees from Łódź, who had taken over part of their home, "helped" the distraught Mrs. Pawulska to pack by appropriating belongings she (the Jewish woman) decided the Pawulskis no longer needed: carpets, boots, pots, food supplies, etc. The Jewish woman also "apologized" to Mrs. Pawulska for having denounced her to the authorities as the wife of a Polish officer who probably had weapons concealed in her home. Of course, a search of the premises revealed no hidden weapons, but false denunciations of this kind which were rampant were enough to seal the fate of this and many other Polish families.

The family of Mieczysław Hampel was also rounded up in Lwów for deportation after midnight. Two Soviet soldiers arrived together with three armed Jews who, typically, were more brutal toward the Polish

family than the Soviet occupiers.

In ***Kopyczyńce,*** on the night of April 13, 1940, a Soviet officer accompanied by two soldiers and Krampf, one of a number of local Jews who served the Soviet occupiers, arrived at the home of Chichłowski family, who were given one hour to pack for their 21-day journey to Siberia.

The family of Sergeant Józef Ungar, the deceased prewar commander of the Polish state police in ***Śniatyn,*** was denounced by local Jews. At three o'clock in the morning on April 13, 1940, Maria Ungar and her two daughters, Jadwiga and Maria, were seized from their home by a NKVD member, two Red army soldiers and a local Jew and deported to the Gulag.

Another Pole recalled his deportation from ***Kuty*** near the prewar Romanian border:

> On the night of the 12 to 13 of April 1940, a threesome arrived to expel my mother and me to Kazakhstan where we would spend six years. The threesome consisted of a Russian NKVD member, Konstantinov, and two local militiamen: the Jew Benek Szerl and the Ukrainian Hryhorii Kushernuk. I have to be fair to the Russian—he was the most courteous toward us and even advised my mother what to take in the permitted ten kilograms of personal effects. On the other hand, Szerl and Kushernuk, without any shame and in front of our eyes, stole for themselves our most valuable belongings: my mother's fur coat, my father's clothing, a silver fox, a rug made out of wolf skins, a box of gold jewelry, etc. They shoved these things under the beds, not listing them in the register of belongings. Thus, after our departure, the threesome must have divided the prize booty among themselves.

A Polish woman recalled how her mother and younger brother and sister, the remants of a family previously decimated by NKVD arrests, were deported from their home in ***Krzemieniec***, in Volhynia, with the active assistance of her neighbours:

> On April 13, 1940, a Ukrainian and Jew, both neighbours, burst through the Sulkowski [Sułkowski] door with a Soviet soldier in tow. My family was given just thirty minutes to pack and were in a state of shock—where does one start? Similar scenes were taking place all over the town as soldiers and militia dragged families into requisitioned wagons with the aid of dogs and bayonets. Screams and tears filled the night…
>
> My brother Czeslaw [Czesław] quickly began packing items into a suitcase and showed my mother and sister how to make up bundles of clothing. The Soviet soldier followed him everywhere and refused to let him take an axe as it could be used as a weapon. Meanwhile the Ukrainian and the Jew looked for plunder. …most of our property was stolen or sold at low prices at an NKVD auction. … From Siberia, my mother would try to contact her Jewish friends but as far as they were concerned, the Sulkowski Family and all their things had ben liquidated—family photos would be thrown into the flames by those who wanted the frames …
>
> My family was loaded into wagons and driven to the train station where other wagons were disgorging their human carfo to the shouts of "*Bystrei!*" [Faster!] while soldiers and the local Jewish and Ukrainian militia brutally kept back frantic relatives. People, mostly women and

children, were crammed 60 and more into an unheated cattle car with no facilities or water, and only a tiny window. The train sat sealed in Krzemieniec for another day and night before setting out for a destination that filled all Poles with dread. …

The train picked up many more victims along the way and would number over a hundred wagons when it finally left Poland. The trip took two weeks under such brutal conditions that the seasoned Soviet train commandant (who expresses sadness over the fate of Polish children) committed suicide under the wheels of a locomotive when the transport finally arrived in Kazakhstan.

The state of mind of this woman's younger sister is recorded in her own memoirs:

> The culmination of our tragedy was the night of April 13 [in 1940] when, during the night, they came for our entire family. There were two civilians among them: a Jew and a Ukrainian. They brought a Soviet soldier who carried a rifle and ordered us to pack. I was in a state of shock. My God, why are they chasing us out of our home? What will become of us? I was stupefied and didn't know what to pack. My mother also lost her head and just stood there crying.

Another Pole, whose family had been moving around to avoid detection, was taken from Krzemieniec that same day along with many other Poles.

> Around three o'clock at night we heard loud knocking on the back door not far from our room. We jumped out of our beds… We heard Mrs. Basińska's name being called out. She was told to pack by a militiaman who came with a Ukrainian guide. We no longer thought of sleeping but started to pack … Half an hour later there was more banging. This time they came for us… In the team that took us away was Danilov from the NKVD, two soldiers and a [Jewish] guide, Szmul Beniaminowicz Bezpojeśnik. …
>
> Apart from two peasant carts, there was a wagon waiting for us. … The entire way Bezpojeśnik sang quietly in Russian "vehement, mighty" ["kipuchaya, moguchaya"—an allusion to a Polish army slogan, "silni, zwarci, gotowi"] mocking that our deportation was a tit for tat for wanting to send Jews from Poland to Palestine [a theoretical plan that the Zionists discussed with the prewar Polish government]. … It was already becoming light. Many other carts moved slowly along the road toward the train station loaded with dejected expellees and their belongings. Passers-by on the street looked with sympathy on this procession except for young Jews who cheerfully clapped [their hands] at the sight of us.

In ***Łuck***, in Volhynia, where the local militia was composed "for the most part" of Jews and Ukrainians, a young boy vividly recalled the deportation of his family:

> After the first mass deportations to Russia in February 1940, when with 30°C below zero the military colonists and their families were deported in unheated freight cars, all the Poles expected the same thing sooner or later. And on Apr. 13 an "N.K.V.D." officer appeared in our lodgings in the company of two armed militiamen and one civilian agent, who was supposed to be a "witness"

to our deportation, so that this act of violence at least had the appearance of legality. It was 4 o'clock in the morning. A Bolshevik locked the door, directed the search, after which he declared that "the Soviet government was moving us to Dnepropetrovsk," where we would join my father, obtain identity cards, and will lead the peaceful carefree lives of Soviet citizens. … A few hours later a truck came to take us to the station. … Cattle cars were all ready at the station platform and rang with the weeping and clamor of the people locked inside. They crowded us into one of the cars where there were already 40 people and their baggage. For three days the train stayed on a siding and horse and foot militia helped by the army kept people away from the cars who wanted to give something to their relatives or at least see them for the last time. During those three days they only let us out twice to get water from the town. We walked in the middle of the road surrounded by guards (with fixed bayonets) and on the sides a crowd surged with excited despairing people. Total strangers sometimes gave us money or bread, but the militia immediately confiscated it. On the fourth day the train finally set out and our journey began.

In ***Kołomyja***, the family of a Polish industrialist was one of the many victims of the second round of deportations of civilians from that city.

The first transport was deported from Kołomyja in February 1940. We were exiled on April 13, 1940. At two o'clock at night we were awakened by the banging of a rifle butt on our door. The previous night my father [Karol Biskupski] and brother had been arrested without being given any reason. On April 12 Krzysia and I had gone to the jail but they would not take our package or allow us to see those who had been arrested. … So when we heard the banging we knew that our turn had come.

Four politruks with rifles entered and one militiaman, a Jew, who acted as an interpreter. We were given fifteen minutes to pack. We were told that we were being sent to another republic. On the list was my mother, [younger sister] Krzysia, I and my [eighty-year-old] grandmother. [Uncle] Rev. Leopold [Dallinger], who lived with us, was not on the list. …

After fifteen minutes we were told to get on a dirty rack wagon. … Romek [an orphan who was cared for by the family] and the militiamen helped us pack. My grandmother went in what she had on because we did not understand until the last moment that there would be no reprieve for an old woman.

We drove through the main streets of Kołomyja. My uncle, the priest, walked behind the carriage. On the way to the train station we passed our [family's] factory. We were amazed to see that almost all of the workers had turned out in front of the factory. Some of their faces were horror-stricken, others wiped away tears with the palm of their hands. As if on orders they took off their hats. They probably thought that we were being sent to our execution.

There was already a crowd of people in front of the train station and the wagons that brought them. We got out of the carriage and waited for someone to carry our bundles to the cattle cars. The militiaman blasted us, "The Polish *Pans* have come to an end. You bloodsuckers have to carry your own things!" On the sly he began to help us to carry our things to the wagons and whispered to my mother, "When you return please remember that Goldberg helped."

My grandmother had difficulty getting into the wagon [of the train] so the politruk gave her a shove. Without giving it much thought I spat at his uniform. At first he drew his revolver, but they probably were under orders not to cause a disturbance, so after he collected himself he said, "We'll settle scores when you get there." Meanwhile my uncle who had not been on the list entered the wagon behind the [rest of the] people.

There were fifty of us in the wagon of this long freight train. The doors were bolted shut and we started to move. The trip lasted three weeks. Once a day we were given thick soup. That's all. We shared the food that we had taken with us from home. … We did not know where we were going. … After a number of days of travelling we crossed the Urals.

In ***Prużana,*** in Polesia,

In February 1940, many people on the outskirts of Pruzana disappeared. Those were all small land owners. The rumors persisted that the Communists had sent them to Siberia. Since we didn't own any land, we thought that deportation will not affect us; but in the first week of March, in the middle of the night, the NKWD [NKVD] (the Russian Secret Service) arrested my father [a Polish social worker decorated by the Polish government; he received a sentence of ten years of hard labour in Siberia—*M.P.*]. On the same night they arrested most of the Polish government workers, shop owners, and other well-to-do people. …

On April 13, 1940 … At 2 A.M., I was awakened by a loud and continuous knocking at the door. As soon as I unlocked the door the Russian soldiers pushed their way in. Some of them entered our home and ordered us to get out of beds, get dressed, and go into one room.

A local Jewish student, a school friend, turned avowed Communist, was with them; he knew us very well and identified us [the author's mother and three siblings—*M.P.*]. By this action he condemned us to deportation. The others searched the house for anything of value, including arms. They confiscated our family albums, missals, some documents, then inventorized furniture and household goods.

Finishing the search, they ordered us to pack a few things and leave the house. …

It was early morning, but by the time they loaded us on an open truck, the whole town was awakened and witnessed our deportation. … Under the strict control of the NKWD and soldiers the truck moved slowly through the central street out of town. I looked around and the only faces I saw were blank and empty of emotion. My mother and grandmother shut their eyes, keeping tears in check. They were more experienced in life and knew there will be no return.

The closest railroad station, Oranczyce [Orańczyce], was twelve kilometers away, where the train with box cars awaited us. … Throughout the next day people were brought to the train and the NKWD put them into the cars, fifty people in each. Barbed wire surrounded the whole train. …

The Communists deported my maternal grandmother, Agnieszka, with us.

The family of Klara Rogalska, then a young girl, consisting of her parents, her sister and her two brothers, were awoken the night of April 13, 1940, by five men who burst into their home in a village not far from the small town of ***Skidel*** near Grodno. Three of the intruders were soldiers dressed in military uniforms; the

other two were Jews who were members of the local militia and wore red armbands. Pointing their rifles the soldiers forced her father and brothers up against the wall. One of the NKVD men announced the verdict banishing her father to eight years in a concentration camp and the family's deportation to Kazakhstan. They were given fifteen minutes to pack. Her mother took two framed pictures depicting Jesus and Mary, wrapped them in an embroidered shawl, and laid them down on a chair. One of the Jews noticed this, went up to chair and knocked the package on the floor. He glanced at the revered pictures with disdain and then smashed the frames and glass energetically with his heal. A long column of carriages carrying families of Polish deportees wound its way to the train station in Skidel 18 kilometres away under the guard of soldiers. There they were loaded into freight cars holding more than forty people each.

In the village of ***Łyntupy*** north of Wilno, a Polish school teacher and her children were startled by the barking of the family dog at four o'clock in the morning. Through the window she spotted three Soviet soldiers and a Jew in civilian clothes, the local commissar, who shouted that he had come with an official document. The commissar, who spoke coarsely in Russian, resembled a Jewish shopkeeper from Święciany who had declared himself to be a Communist as soon as the Soviets entered. The soldiers roughed the Polish family up and gave them thirty minutes to pack their belongings. The commissar demanded money from her warning that he knew how to teach respect to "Polish bitches" like her. He pressed the soldiers not to delay once the time limit had expired. At the train station he stood on watch to ensure that all of the Polish deportees were loaded into the wagons. Many of the Poles were struck by the soldiers and civilians who took part in this operation.

The family of the former Polish police commander in ***Szarkowszczyzna*** had already been expelled from their home on February 10, 1940. Their neighbour, "Comrade" Shloma, who had become proficient in Russian, came that day and, with a smile on his face, handed over "an order from Minsk" informing them that their home had been requisitioned by the Soviet authorities. The following morning local militiamen arrived to ensure that order had been complied with. The family was rounded up together with the remnants of the local Polish intelligentsia and kulaks on April 12, 1940 and deported to the Gulag from the local train station.

The third wave of deportations ensued in June 1940, and encompassed very many Jewish refugees from the German zone. A Polish refugee from the German zone described the situation in ***Złoczów,*** where the local militia was comprised mostly of Jews and Ukrainians, as follows:

> As the date of June 29 [1940] approached, not just the so-called refugees from Western and Central Poland, but all of the residents of Złoczów became more and more uneasy. In the afternoon of that day [June 28] our host, a doctor, came and told us that on the hill near the castle which served as a prison a large number of carts had been assembled. They had been brought in from almost the entire county. Our host counselled us not to sleep in our home … He tried to persuade me that that night something would happen because too many communists had been brought into the town, which was a sure sign of some NKVD operation. … we decided, the three of us, to wait. …

… Our host's fourteen-year-old son, acting as a liaison, kept bringing new information from town. … Around 1:30 o'clock at night we could clearly hear military detachments and the NKVD passing on the road and, from time to time, the banging of their rifles on the doors of homes. We heard these sounds distinctly coming from the neighbouring home. Around 2:15 o'clock they began to bang on the door of our house. The host decided not to open the door. The banging became louder and louder until the door was broken down and some people came up the staircase. I was almost certain that they were coming to our room and I waited with determination.

In fact two members of the NKVD entered in the company of four Soviet soldiers and two civilians. I soon found out that these civilians were residents of Złoczów, local communists who helped out in these shameful deeds. The NKVD representative came into our room and asked for my name. After I provided my name, he instructed us to get dressed … The men then started to search the premises, which lasted a very brief time. … After packing our things we waited for the truck to come which was to take us away. Since the trucks were occupied, some carriage was brought into which we were loaded. We were driven in the direction of the train station …

At the train station—at that time it was almost light—stood a long train consisting of freight cars. Many of our friends peered from out of the wagons. We all wondered where we were being sent. … We were crowded into a wagon which was already full of people. Normally the wagon could have held no more than thirty people, but was packed with sixty-four people. Almost the entire wagon was occupied by Jews from various parts of the country [i.e., refugees from the German zone—*M.P.*].

Another Pole recalled how he and his family were seized from their home in the countryside near ***Pohost Zahorodzki*** (or ***Pohost Zahorodny***) in Polesia:

On the 20th of June, 1940, I had intended to take a small boat out on a lake … I was awakened by loud knocking, first at the door, then the window. Looking out, I saw a local Jew whom I knew and next to him an officer and a soldier of the NKVD. I knew the significance of this situation at once. They had come to arrest us and send us to Siberia.

The officer ordered me to open the door. When he entered he read out an order as follows: "By decree of the Supreme Soviet you are sentenced to exile into the interior of the Soviet Union for five years as untrustworthy citizens towards the Soviet government."

He announced that they would search the house and all our possessions. There were four of us there—my mother, my little sister who was only six years old, and my mother's father. My father was already in a Soviet lager, having been caught while trying to cross the border between the Soviet Union and Poland in 1940.

Frightened by what was happening, my sister sobbed bitterly. Having carried out the search, the officer also had tears in his eyes as he whispered quietly in Russian: "There are beggars in Russia who have more possessions than you." The communist propaganda which was drummed into them about the wealth of Polish "gentlemen" and bourgeoisie could not be reconciled with what he saw there. He told us that we had half an hour in which to pack. …

> We were living from day to day and had no reserves of food. We packed a bit of clothing and bedding, whatever we could, in sacks. … A cart came and our things were loaded on it. …
>
> We were placed on the cart together with the driver and soldier, while the officer and the Jew followed on foot … It was only a short distance to the little town of Pohost-Zahorodzki where waited two Soviet trucks, already partly filled with others also sentenced to exile. I was surprised to find a number of Jewish families among them—some whom I knew….

The family of Zelman Drezner, Jewish refugees from Ostrołęka who had relocated to ***Lida,*** was rounded up in June 1940 by a patrol headed by a Jewish officer who arrived at their home at night. They were taken to the train station where they were loaded into freight wagons packed with Jews and Poles and dispatched to Arkhangelsk.

A Jewish refugee from Warsaw who had obtained employment in ***Białystok*** as a technical engineer was demoted after refusing to accept a Soviet passport. His attempt to hide, together with his wife, at a friend's home ended in failure when the NKVD arrived and apprehended all of the residents. Since he did not have a passport he and his wife were taken to the train station under the guard of a young armed Jew with a red armband. On the way, they stopped at their home to gather up a few belongings which were loaded on a carriage driven by another young Jew.

Maria Wanda Ciuman together with her husband Eustachy Stanisław Ciuman, both teachers, and her sister sister Aleksandra Żywicka were three of five Poles arrested by the NKVD from their home on Bułgarska Street in ***Lwów***, late in the night on June 29, 1940 and loaded on freight trains. Their wagon held 52 people. Most of the passengers were Jewish refugees from central Poland who had registered to return to the German zone earlier that year. Among them were two young Jewish men from Warsaw with pro-Communist sympathies who had signed up for work in the Donbas mines in October 1939, but had returned to Lwów quite disillusioned with life in the Soviet Union. Some of the Jews who were petty merchants or tradesmen, rather than focus on their tangible enemies—the Germans and the Soviets, continued to manifest their anti-Polish sentiments at that late date by directing at the Polish passengers of a train destined for the Gulag insults like "Your Pans' Poland Has Ended."

The fourth and final wave of deportations was carried out in June of the following year (1941), on the eve of the German invasion. The spectacle witnessed in ***Wilno*** was typical. On June 13, 1941, Jews mounted Soviet trucks where they stood and directed the drivers to the homes of Poles whose names had been put on the lists for deportation. Entire Polish families along with small children and the elderly were unceremoniously hauled out of their homes and loaded on trucks. The trucks carted them off to the train station and then returned for more human cargo.

In ***Nowe Święciany***, to the north of Wilno, a 12-year-old boy recalled how on June 12, 1941, at six o'clock in the morning, just after his mother had returned from work, their house was surrounded by Bolsheviks.

> A Jew by the name of Szerman entered the house accompanied by five NKVD members. We were told to sit on a couch. After searching the premises, they ordered us to pack. We were told we were being relocated because Bolshevik soldiers were to move into our house. After a little while some wagons came by and took us to the train station. There I saw a string of 70 wagons. The windows were grated. I understood at once that we had been fooled. … We were packed into a wagon … There were about 60 people in the wagon altogether. It was very hot. We didn't have water for three days. The elderly and children were fainting from the heat. At the larger stations we were given one bucket of water which was grabbed by everyone. After two weeks of such tedious travel we arrived in the city of Novosibirsk.

Yitzhak Arad, a Jewish historian with the Yad Vashem Institute, describes conditions he witnessed in the nearby town of ***Święciany***:

> During the night of June 14, 1941, the town was shocked when NKVD and militia members took hundreds of people from their houses and placed them under arrest. Most of the arrested had been officials of the Polish government, landowners, officers in the Polish army—men who had been wealthy or active in political parties (excluding the Communist party). That night similar raids took place throughout Lithuania; close to 30,000 people, entire families among them, were arrested and deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan. … Jews played a relatively large role in the Communist party apparatus that was behind the action.

In ***Ejszyszki***, Jewish sources confirm Polish reports that, as elsewhere, the lists of deportees were compiled with "considerable help" from local Jews.

> Deportation to Siberia was another threat issued to the well-to-do, and to whoever else was thought to "pose a danger to Communism." … Within Eishyshok itself, the shtetl Communists had prepared a list of people to be deported, but as a personal favor to Moshe Sonenson, Luba Ginunski removed the names of the Sonenson family as well as those of their friends the Kiuchefskis, for Moshe had helped the Ginunski family through some hard times.

That historian, however, fails to notice that among the victims of the deportations conducted in Ejszyszki on June 12, 1941, there were many Poles, especially the families of former Polish police officers.

A similar situation prevailed in ***Szczuczyn*** near Łomża. There too the lists of deportees had been drawn up with the assistance of local Communists, for the most part Jews.

> Suddenly, at one in the morning [in June 1941], the N.K.V.D. arrived with search warrants, according to an official list from the Communist Civilian Committee. … After a thorough search the N.K.V.D. men ordered us in a sharp tone: "We give you 15 minutes to get dressed and pack your things. You will be sent out to Siberia. Cars are already waiting." …
>
> From the entire area they were bringing people to the train station [in Grajewo] in order to send them to Siberia. People were stuffed into wagon cars like packed herring. There were many Polish

> people as well. Altogether there were 72 wagons for approximately 300 of us. Before placing us in the cars the N.K.V.D. frisked everyone over again and surveyed the lists of names.

In ***Orla,*** a small town near Bielsk Podlaski, Tadeusz Wróblewski was denounced at a public meeting by a former student of his, a Jew. This young man addressed his remarks to a uniformed Soviet functionary extolling his Polish teacher's participation in the Polish-Soviet War of 1919–1920 and his prewar patriotic activities. Wróblewski was promptly arrested on June 20, 1941, and taken to the jail in Białystok. His wife, daughter, son and mother-in-law were seized and deported to Siberia. The train wagon that left Bielsk Podlaski with them contained more than forty Poles. When they reached Altai, their remote destination, they were quartered in a building used to raise cattle.

Maria Niwińska was seized from her home in ***Białystok*** the night of June 20 to 21 together with her family by a group of policeman consisting of Jews and one Russian. The Jews searched her husband and took him away. The Russian helped them pack some belongings. The rest of the family were taken to a train station in the industrial area and packed on a freight wagon. Their train did not leave until the following day. The passengers became even more terrified when the Germans started to drop bombs on the retreating Soviets.

Some from among the last batch of people to be deported did not make it to the Gulag because of the intervening German attack on the Soviet Union. A Pole who resided with his parents in ***Grodno*** recalled:

> On the night of June 20 to 21, 1941, at one o'clock at night, we were awoken by sudden and brutal knocking on the door. My mother opens the door. Into the home come four people: two NKVD soldiers with rifles, an NKVD officer and a local Jew whom we recognized. The officer says to us in Russian: "On orders of the Soviet government you are being resettled … You have an hour to pack …" My mother asks: "Are we being sent to Russia?" The officer replies: "Yes. There's a truck on the street outside the window. That's where you'll be loaded on." …
>
> After being loaded on, the Soviets close and seal our home … But we do not go far. After about twenty to thirty metres the vehicle stops and some of the Soviets get out. After a while they return with Mrs. Gawrońska and her daughter Maura, whom we know. Maura is my friend. They carry their bundles and packages. They're also being deported. We help them load their baggage into the bin on the truck. … The vehicle continues on driving through the city which is still empty even though it's morning.

In ***Łomża,*** Jews reportedly delighted in the spectacle of Poles being rounded up on June 20th and 21st and hauled off to the train station. They shouted threats that soon all the Poles would be deported. The largely Jewish militia who played a key role in the last deportation of Poles in nearby ***Kolno*** partied late and boisterously the evening of June 21st to celebrate the success of their task. They were caught by surprise when the Nazi entered the town the next morning. In ***Siemiatycze,*** even Nazi officials joined in the merry-making:

> The night before the German attack on Soviet Russia on June 20, 1941, there was a ball in Semiatych. It was attended, as always in recent days, by the German border patrol from the other side.

For many Jews who faced the same fate, the circumstances of their own deportation constituted a rude awakening:

> On Friday, in the night, we were woken up by NKVD men. They would not let us pack anything, but the Jewish militiaman who was with them allowed us to take a few things.

According to another Jewish testimony,

> One day an NKVD official, a Jew, appeared at our house and asked to see our papers. Then NKVD men came in the night with the same official, who this time refused to speak Yiddish to us, and we were taken to the station.

A Jew from ***Wołożyn*** recalled:

> On a sprigtime evening in March 1940 … We heard knocking at the door. It was opened. An NKVD agent with two local citizens entered. The three searched all closets, wardrobes and chests. The policemen ordered my father to dress. … went out into the dark, escorted by the three of them. It was the last time we saw and heard of our father [the owner of a flour mill]. He was forty-two years old.
>
> Mother went from door to door. She begged for help from the new elite to free our father. One of the suddenly powerful promised, a second claimed that he could not help, and the third answered mockingly. …
>
> On Friday morning April 13, 1940 … they appeared: the NKVD agent with his two local aides. In front of us, the agent read the official document: As individuals not reliable to the Soviet government, we should be expelled from the border country and transferred to resettle in the central regions of the Soviet Union. … We were driven in this [horse-drawn] cart to the Horod'k [Gródek] rail station.

In anticipation of the German invasion in June 1941, the Soviets focused their attention again on real and perceived political opponents, especially those who had been incarcerated, and liquidated thousands of them on the spot in many towns, often with unspeakable and sadistic cruelty. Among the victims were some Jews. But there are also many authentic reports of local Jews in the service of the Soviets taking part in the mass executions of prisoners carried out by the Soviet security forces. In addition, hundreds of Poles were also killed in frantic operations in the countryside.

Mykhailo Rosliak, a Ukrainian lawyer and activist from Czortków, was apprehended in the streets of ***Lwów*** on June 22, 1941 after being spotted by Jonas Buchberg, a Jewish NKVD officer from his

hometown. Buchberg ordered Rosliak's arrest in Russian and took him to the jail on Jachowicz Street. The next day Rosliak was transferred to the notorious prison known as Brygidki, where he witnessed the execution of scores of political prisoners before the NKVD fled from Lwów on June 28th.

On June 23, 1941, just hours before the Soviet retreat, the NKVD, accompanied by two Jewish policemen from Brańsk, Berko Brojde and the son-in-law of Nisel Łowszyc, marched about a dozen Poles from the jail in Brańsk to Białystok. The prisoners were brutally murdered en route near the village of ***Folwarki Tylwickie*** near Zabłudów. The victims included Zofia Marcinkowska (age 19), Józef Wierciński, Stanisław Wójcik, Stanisław Stolarczyk, all from Ciechanowiec, Stanisław Akacki from Skórzec, Jan Koc, Bolesław Maksimczuk, Aleksander Kwiatkowski from the village of Olendy, Ignacy Płoński from Brańsk (a neighbour of the two Jewish policemen), Helena Zaziemska, a schoolteacher from Spieszyn.

In ***Czortków***, the situation was particularly tragic. Local Jews in the service of the NKVD played a key role in the horrific execution of eight Dominican priests and monks on the eve of the German entry.

> The situation of the [Dominican] monastery changed drastically on the 22nd of June 1941 when the Soviet-German war broke out. The rapid advance of the German armies eastward gave rise to universal panic. As was the custom in the Stalinist system, above all they rushed to liquidate real and suspected enemies of the Communist government. Included among that group were members of the clergy. The security forces, together with a military unit directed [to Czortków], suddenly arrived and dragged out of the monastery three barely dressed monks, Father Justyn Spyrłak, the prior, Father Jacek Misiuta and Father Anatol Znamierowski, as well as Brother Andrzej Bojanowski. They were driven to the banks of the river in Stary Czortków, to a dam known as Berda, where they were killed by bullet shots in the back of the head. The executioners were Jews who served in the NKVD, which is confirmed by the testimonies of residents of Czortków …
>
> News of the deaths of the Dominicans spread quickly through the town and surroundings. Crowds converged on the spot where the murdered monks lay. People were in tears. Some knelt and, with the greatest reverence, dipped their handkerchiefs in the blood; others gathered the blood-stained soil in dishes and kissed the places where the bodies lay.
>
> Despite requests the Soviet authorities would not allow the monks to be buried in the monastic vault in the cemetery. They were buried where they were found. They were to be buried by two o'clock in the afternoon on July 2nd or else their bodies would be thrown into the river nearby. …
>
> Nothing could be found out about the remaining monks because the army guarded the entrance to the monastery and the church remained shut. Despite these obstacles one student was able to get into the church and from there into the cells on the main floor. What he saw was horrifying. In their beds lay the murdered Brothers Reginald Czerwonka and Metody Iwaniszczów, and the tertiary Józef Wincentowicz. All of them had been shot in the head. Information was still lacking about the fate of Father Hieronim Longwa, who lived on the second floor and could not be reached.
>
> The Soviet security forces also plundered the church, destroying in a barbaric manner objects of devotion and profaning the Blessed Sacrament, which was spilled out of containers and deliberately trampled. The entire church was a picture of deliberate devastation. In an attempt to cover up the signs of their crimes, on July 4th the army set fire to the monastery. …

> On Sunday morning, July 6th, German forces entered Czortków. Only now was it possible to bury the murdered monks in the monastic tomb and to say a mass of mourning. In preparation for the funeral of these additional victims, the door to the room on the second floor of the monastery was broken open. It appeared that Father Longwa had been killed at the same time as the other brothers. The bed on which he lay was probably deliberately set on fire and burned together with his body. Only a few pieces of bones were left to be gathered.
>
> The funeral of Father Hieronim Longwa and the murdered brothers took place on July 6th, at two o'clock in the afternoon. It was attended by a large throng of people. The church bells rang for the first time during the war. A formal mass of mourning was celebrated on July 8th. On Sunday, July 12th, after the high mass, a procession wound its way to the grave of the priests. A wreath of thorns adorned with purple flowers was carried as a symbol of their tragic deaths. …
>
> This crime, perpetrated just before the cowardly escape of the Soviets in advance of the approaching German army, was not the only one to affect this small town. In the last few days before leaving Czortków, hundreds of people, Ukrainians and Poles, were murdered in the jail.

Many Poles and Ukrainians imprisoned in ***Tarnopol*** were executed shortly before the Soviet retreat. "Three Jews from Trembowla—the cab-driver Kramer, Dawid Kümel and Dawid Rosenberg—took part in the murder of prisoners in the jail in Tarnopol."

According to the few Ukrainian prisoners who survived the bloodbath in the prison in ***Łuck,*** "with more or less serious injuries, the Jews again played a decisive part in the arrests and shootings."

In ***Dubno***, Colonel Chaim Vinokur

> raced from cell to cell spraying the prisoners with bullets. Teresa Trautman, Bronek Rumel, Jerzy Bronikowski, Tadeusz Majewski, Ryszard Kasprzycki and many other friends and underground members were murdered by Vinokur and his henchmen. Most were young students with their whole lives ahead of them.

In the face of such atrocities is it surprising that many people regarded the arrival of the Germans as a reprieve—at least a temporary one—and that some decided to seek revenge when the Germans threw open the jails crammed with putrefying bodies sometimes mangled beyond recognition? Yet, contrary to what is claimed in Jewish sources discussed later on, the departure of the Soviets did not usher in a period of mass reprisals by the Poles directed indiscriminately at the Jews. By and large they targeted collaborators regardless of their nationality.

The extent of Jewish complicity in Soviet atrocities can be gauged, to some degree, by considering the number and composition of the local authorities who fled along with the retreating Soviet army in June 1941. Of the 2,926 persons who left five counties in the former Polish province of Stanisławów, 2,438—or about 85 percent—were Jews. According to a Jewish source, some 7,000–8,000 Jews from the city of Wilno, most of whom were active supporters of the Soviet regime, fled with the Red Army in June 1941. Ordinary Jewish civilians rarely took the initiative to leave at that time, and if they did, they were frequently turned back by the Soviets. Since the survival rate of those who fled to the Soviet Union was

very high, and given their complicity in the Soviet occupation of 1939–1941, it is not surprising that many of them were to resurface in “People’s Poland” as Communist functionaries.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Holocaust Historiography

Over the years, Holocaust historians and apologists have painted a distinctly different picture of Jewish-Polish relations in Poland's Eastern Borderlands from that outlined above. (The notable exception here is Israeli historian Ben-Cion Pinchuk.) Jews are portrayed uniformly as loyal citizens of Poland whose conduct was beyond reproach. Little if anything is mentioned about their mistreatment of Poles. Occasionally, one hears that a handful of Jewish Communists "disarmed" some Polish soldiers and police, however, there is scant detail given in describing those events. On the other hand, the vengeful Polish army is accused of wantonly attacking Jews—according to Dov Levin, they "savaged" any Jews they encountered. Local Poles, all of them reputedly anti-Semites by nature, are said to have perpetrated unprovoked pogroms. How much of these charges are based on fact, and how much are steeped in bigotry? Objective eyewitnesses to those events who recorded their recollections during the war present a different story.

A Jewish refugee from Warsaw describes his encounters with Polish soldiers during his peregrination in Eastern Poland as the country was on the verge of collapse in mid-September 1939. Although this 22-year-old young man fit the classic profile of a radicalized youth, and would thus appear to be a prime target for suspicion if not revenge, his experiences belie the charge that, despite the turmoil surrounding them, Polish soldiers "savaged" Jews.

> We set off in the direction of Biała Podlaska. … The town is in a flurry. One can hear machine gunfire. They say the front is 7 km past Biała. We move on, we want to reach Brześć. Routed army units move along with us. The attitude of the soldiers toward us is very good, they share their food with us. …
>
> [Closer to Brześć:] Polish soldiers took cover in the forest from German airplanes … In the Polish detachment we are offered coffee made from cubes, which revived us somewhat. … Our group now consists of 11 persons, as five had left it. …
>
> In the evening another terrible experience: the highway is under fire from wandering guerrillas and army units. We approach a small burning bridge where a column of military vehicles is waiting, as it cannot cross. … On the way we pass the building of a Polish elementary school which is full of people. The principal opens the door and shows us that the main building is packed. … The principal leads us to the village and makes a villager open his barn for us. [The villagers in Polesia were not Poles, whose friendly attitude is contrasted favorably in this account.] …
>
> In the morning we march on toward Kobryń. On the way we are stopped by a well-organized Polish military unit. They control all the travellers and check their documents. Single persons are detained. … We return to Kowel by a circular route. In the orchards we take fruit for free. Polish soldiers treated us in a friendly manner, without any sign of anti-Semitism. They point out the road

and tell us: "Go and take some." …

We walk in the direction of Dywin, far from the highway and railroad. … [The Jewish inhabitants] urge us to remain in the town, [as] the Polish authorities and police outpost are still there. All of a sudden we encounter an unpleasant surprise. Wanting to clear the place of shirkers and various infiltrators and deserters, the commander detains us as well and takes us to a holding centre outside the town. … We are given more food than we need so we give some back. We ask what they want from us and why we were locked up. No one can answer us. The guards are also newcomers and, honestly speaking, they don't know what's happening. In the morning we are given bread and coffee and are set free. …

[The town of Ratno] was still in Polish hands. Polish units ride through fully armed and in an orderly fashion, which makes a good impression. The officers are recruiting for the legion that is forming in Romania. … This does not last long as signs of anarchy and chaos become visible. The police stations demand that people surrender their weapons and threaten to shoot for disobedience. … People who came from Kowel tell that Kowel and Brześć are already occupied by the Russians. In Ratno a militia is formed consisting of villagers, Ukrainians and Belorussians, and Jewish activists, who disarm Polish policemen of their rifles. A mixed revkom (revolutionary committee) is formed consisting of villagers and Jews. They greet the Russian army and build a [triumphal] gate. The [Polish] commander flees. The town is decorated with red flags made out of Polish flags from which the white part was ripped away. We lived through a terrible night.

There were still regular Polish detachments in Kamień Koszyrski, 40 km from Ratno. In the evening, they sent out a scouting patrol which took over the police outpost at the edge of the town. The [new] militia greeted them with shots and arrested them … To everyone's surprise a large detachment of several thousand soldiers soon approached. All night various armed formations marched through, including heavy artillery. The captives were freed, and four Ukrainian militiamen were killed. The shooting lasted all night. The command announced that they would set off through Włodawa in the direction of Warsaw to relieve the beleaguered capital. Fate did not allow them to reach Warsaw. In the morning they were bombed by the Red airforce. Soon after a light Soviet tank appeared in the outskirts and drove through the streets of the town. This was a sign that the Red army was approaching. The people [i.e., non-Poles] gathered near the highway to greet them.

A member of a group of six Jewish men who fled from Warsaw provided a similar description of conditions in Eastern Poland—free of "savage" Polish soldiers and frenzied Polish mobs—before the arrival of the Soviets.

In this way we arrived in Chełm and here we hit a dead end: we weren't allowed in. Luckily we accidentally ran into a lieutenant we knew who suggested that we complete our journey on an evacuation train. … however, it soon turned out that … the train was bombed …

In Kowel our group grew by one more companion, an officer of the Polish army who proved to be very useful and resourceful: he somehow managed to obtain a country wagon with a horse …

About 20 km from Łuck (the evening of September 17th), we were unexpectedly shot at from a brush by a group of Ukrainians … Fortunately behind us was an army transport and supply column

and their commanders allowed us to join it, which we eagerly took advantage of. Around 12 midnight, about 5 km from Łuck, we were unexpectedly illuminated by reflectors. Soviet tanks. The first thing we were questioned about was weapons, which we were told to give up immediately. …

After our arrival in Łuck we were searched several times by the Citizens' Militia, created *ad hoc*, which was recruited for the most part from Jews and armed with weapons taken from Polish soldiers. They took from my military companions their belts and ammunition pouches and ordered their officer's badges be pulled off. The rest of that night … we spent on the floor of a cinema …

The following morning we ascertained to our surprise that there was no Soviet army in the city at all, and that only the post office, railway station, provincial offices and other important buildings were taken over by them, and beyond that guard was kept by the Citizens' Militia which consisted of elements of the town's proletariat, with a distinct preponderance of Jews. It was only on the 19th of September in the morning that the first transports of Soviet infantry arrived by vehicle. They were greeted with flowers and raised fists, and here and there people were even singing the Internationale. Within an hour all the streets were full of small groups of people who gathered around individual soldiers and spoke with them animatedly, often even in Yiddish.

Herman Kruk, an erstwhile Communist and later Bundist, also paints a strikingly different picture of conditions than that suggested by historian Dov Levin.

…another guest stands in the door—our [Jewish] friend Staszek Broder, a partner in a big boardinghouse in Otwock. … He stands before us in a military uniform—he is a sergeant.

Joyous at meeting everyone, Staszek Broder tells his story:

He is coming from German captivity. He fell into German hands near Prasznice, was there four hours and escaped. He went with a horse and wagon for three days and three nights. He traveled with a priest and two soldiers, who escaped with him. Here [in Kowel] they parted from one another. But he keeps the Christian with the wagon. It is a wagon with two horses, which he got at a farm. …

Albert Kozik, the non-commissioned officer, reports to us that he is putting some of his soldiers at the disposal of the city headquarters. We remain with only him and two of his Christian fellow soldiers.

Thus we again have a wagon with two horses. Our camp is thus: there are 6 of us who have traveled from Warsaw, our friend the silk merchant Dovid Sadowski, the officer Albert and his 2 colleagues, and Sergeant Broder. With the driver, this is a group of 12 people. …

At sundown we leave Kowel for Sarny. …

At 7 in the evening [September 17th], we arrive in Mielnica.

In the outskirts of the town, a young man meets us and asks if we want to eat. He takes us to a house … The house is full of refugees. Refugees are eating there, Jews and Christians, policemen, soldiers. Everyone is grateful and touched by the hospitality. They don't take money from anyone. The host and hostess in the house are busy, they cook soup, they serve. People come and go.

Later we found in that town, the Jews do miracles. For a whole week they have been cooking,

baking bread, taking care of lodging—they do that for everyone with no distinction of Jew or Christian. …

Early in the morning [September 18th], our non-commissioned officer learned that a colonel called a meeting of officers. … The order given at the meeting was: the Bolsheviks are taking the entire region; more precise details are not yet known and therefore, for the time being, the orders are as follows:

Not to mount any resistance and even to let oneself be disarmed—but all soldiers had to leave for Łuck to join the entire Polish garrison of the Volhynia province.

Once again a turmoil. We don't understand what is going on there. All of us go out to the highway … We decide to go to Kowel. … We turn around and take the road to Łuck.

The highway becomes fuller from one minute to the next. … A military truck rushes by … For kilometers we drive … On a side, on the right, stands a long line of cars. The soldiers are distributing underwear, uniforms, and shoes to everyone without exception.

A colonel and his officers stand on the side there and watch the soldiers rule. Soldiers, police, farmers, Jews—everyone gets what they want and there is an abundance for everyone. …

We look around. Kozik stands fraternally with yesterday's chief of the Świętokrzysk [Świętokrzyski] prison—he is there, too, and persuades my friend to take:

"Should it fall into the hands of foreigners? Better your own people should enjoy it …"

… The highway is full as usual with police, soldiers, farmers, escaping Jews, etc. Hordes of cyclists are rushing by as if they want to get home as fast as possible.

We stop again, we stop people to talk with them, and we learn:

The Bolsheviks entered Łuck; they disarmed and released all Polish soldiers and sent them home.

Ten of thousands of people are now running from Łuck; hardly hundreds are now going toward Łuck.

About 10 kilometers outside Łuck, we learn that the [Ukrainian] peasants all around are attacking the Polish soldiers and disarming them. Suddenly we hear violent rifle shots, Everyone runs into the woods and stretches out on the ground. The first ones who run are the soldiers who were passing by.

I am also very frightened:

"We've already had such a difficult trip. We've already overcome such horrible bombings and suddenly, here, to die from a saboteur's rifle bullet?"

Fortunately, things calmed down around us. On the highway a mixed group gathered: soldiers and civilians are standing together there and everyone is consulting about what to do next.

An officer explains:

"The [Ukrainian] peasants are attacking us—we absolutely must get into Łuck because here the peasants can slaughter us. I will give rifles to everyone who can shoot; we must absolutely get into the city!"

Many civilians get rifles, others only cartridges. Armed against any attack, we get into a long convoy of soldiers and civilians. Some of us direct our rifles to the left side of the highway, others to the right side.

It is late in the evening when we see the first column of Soviet tanks in front of us. They are drawn up in the field on both sides of the highway. …

> In Łuck, we came across a new wave of people. …
>
> The day after the entry of the Bolsheviks, groups of the new militia [composed largely of Jews, as we know from other accounts—*M.P.*] disarmed Polish soldiers. A Jewish fellow stopped a high profile Polish officer and challenged him to give him his weapon. The officer gave his revolver, which he carried on his belt. Finally, the young militiaman began removing the medals from the officer. The officer complained that he couldn't take them from him. The fellow threatened him with the rifle. The officer then took another revolver out of a holster and shot the militiaman on the spot. The officer was arrested. [The Polish officer was undoubtedly summarily executed shortly after. *M.P.*]

Jewish-Lithuanian historian Sarunas Leikis offers another, rather perverse, interpretation of what transpired in the Eastern Borderlands. He relativizes, and in effect denies, the murder of at least 5,000 Poles by their non-Polish neighbours by advancing the claim that this was simply an inter-ethnic struggle in which

> Polish citizens of all backgrounds—Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Jews—fought against each other in the last hours of the Second Polish Republic. These encounters, which were often bloody, contributed to the atmosphere of chaos and lawlessness.
>
> Only the Soviet advance averted full-scale civil war. The average citizen most probably preferred foreign occupation to battles, robbery, and the settling of local scores …

According to that author, "the Polish army, joined by Polish civilians, turned against unsympathetic locals on numerous occasions," seemingly for no particular reason. He gives no credence to reports of Jews attacking, denouncing or even harassing Poles: it was the Poles who attacked Jews, the traditional, but blameless, "scapegoats." Indeed, Liekis reproaches Polish scholarship for shifting blame for the collapse of the Polish state onto the minorities, but cites no historian who supposedly has advanced this preposterous theory. He also suggests that a better focus for academic inquiry would be "the [Polish] army's so-called 'betrayal' of its fellow citizens or the inadequacy and disarray of the Polish state apparatus." Liekis has thus placed himself beyond the pale of acceptable historical discourse.

According to Holocaust historians, the Jews who greeted the Soviets were few in number and did so only out of gratitude for being saved from falling into the hands of the Germans and, to a lesser extent, local anti-Semites. According to Jan T. Gross, the Jews "had a very clear awareness as to what might have happened had the Soviets not arrived." Elsewhere, however, Gross concedes that there was a lot of "confusion" as to what was happening when the Soviets entered Poland: it was not at all clear that they came as liberators. The fact that "a few" Jews served in the Soviet militia was blown out of all proportion by Poles and was later used by them to reinforce their long-standing hatred of the Jews. There was in fact no collaboration on the part of the Jews, we are told. The local militias that sprang up were merely self-defence groups set up to stave off local pogromists and were soon disbanded. There is no truth to the claim that Jews played any significant role in the Soviet administration or that they were privileged in any way or

treated more favourably than the Poles. That was just a false perception held by anti-Semitic Poles.

Gross contends that it was actually the Jews who most openly manifested their opposition and resistance to Communism—a claim that is amply discredited by Jewish sources which readily acknowledge that there was no organized or intentional opposition to Soviet rule to speak of. Gross also contends that it was the Jews who suffered the most at the hands of the Soviet regime—a claim that has been addressed and dismissed earlier in the text. As has been pointed out, initially the Polish and Jewish elite bore the brunt of the expropriation, though the Communists generally employed Jewish shopkeepers in warehouses, local artisans in technical positions and others in the bureaucracy. Afterwards, the hardest hit were the 250,000 Polish civilians deported to the Gulag who lost their property and most of their possessions. On the other hand, of the 70,000 Jewish deportees, more than 60 percent were refugees from the German zone and thus had few material goods to lose. Contemporary observers such as Professor Maurycy Allerhand, a renowned jurist and erstwhile president of the Jewish community in Lwów, had no difficulty in discerning the true state of affairs in his wartime diary where he recorded in July 1941: "Poles suffered the most, then the Jews, and the Ukrainians the least." What is more, recent historiography accuses the Poles of insensitivity to the fate of the downtrodden Jews under Soviet occupation.

Such views have acquired a prolific life of their own in popular writings and many authors go even further in demonizing the Poles. Basing himself on hearsay conveyed by his father, one influential journalist—Max Frankel, the executive editor of *The New York Times* from 1986 to 1994—went so far as to charge the Poles of becoming eager pawns in the Soviet designs (designs which take a strange twist in that author's mind), and rushing to denounce Jews and benefit from their misfortune.

> When the Russians closed down private businesses as decadent relics of another era, many Poles tried to save their own possessions by turning in Jews as the preeminent "capitalists." The Soviets gratefully accepted their confiscatory assistance, but they were not primarily interested in planting Marxism or spreading revolution. They wanted half of Poland as a buffer to secure their hold on the Ukraine and the recently seized territories of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania in the north and Bessarabia in the south.

Thus most Holocaust historians and Jews writing on this topic are singularly reluctant to come to terms with problematic aspects of Jewish conduct vis-à-vis Poles or to view the conduct of Poles as determined by anything other than an endemic, irrational anti-Semitism divorced from Jewish actions. The fact that many Jews were actively involved in the persecution of Poles in the Soviet zone, and not vice versa, is dismissed out of hand as being either untrue or thoroughly exaggerated and, in any event, inconsequential. These attempts to explain away Jewish conductare, however, largely unsuccessful. The story of a uniform, considered, and tempered reaction (on the part of Jews) that fully anticipated future events (the possibility that German occupation would bring genocide) is no more convincing than a historical approach that treats Jews not as players but as a passive monolith. Furthermore, as Gross has observed, it is impossible to dispute the reality of autonomous dynamics in the relationships between Poles and Jews within the

constraints imposed by the occupiers.

Were there, in fact, only "a few" Jews who took part in activities directed against the Polish state, Polish officials and soldiers, and Poles in general? And where these Jews mostly "persecuted" prewar Communists who had little, if any, connection with the Jewish community? The copious accounts gathered in this study show that even in the smallest community at least a score of activists from various political backgrounds could be readily found in the community to organize a welcome for the Soviets and to take over the local administration and militia. This groundwork then facilitated the installation of the new regime on the local level and the carrying out of the necessary orders and arrests of targeted Poles. What is more, the Jewish activitists could garner significant support, both active and passive, from the entire spectrum of the Jewish community. Some of this support was doubtless attributable to anti-Polish rather than, or in addition to, pro-Communist or pro-Soviet sentiments.

What is more, the Jewish activitists could garner significant support, both active and passive, from the entire spectrum of the Jewish community. Some of this support was undoubtedly attributable to anti-Polish rather than pro-Communist or pro-Soviet sentiments. The notion that this was the work of socially marginal elements within Jewish society who were alienated from the Jewish community is simply not tenable. As Yehuda Bauer observed, "respect for parents was such that convinced Marxist youths would go to the synagogue because their parents did." A young Jew from a well-off family in Czortków vividly recalled the lecture he received from his father, a dental technician and prewar Communist party member: "Son, you can be proud that you belong to the chosen people, chosen by God." Being a Communist or pro-Communist did not mean one stopped regarding onself as Jewish.

According to Jaff Schatz, in the 1930s there were between 6,200 and 10,000 Jewish Communists in Poland and only a small portion of these had been imprisoned. It is also worth noting that the Communist Party of Poland, a subversive organization sponsored by the Soviet Union which was dominated, especially in small towns, by Jews, did not recognize Polish dominion over the Eastern Borderlands even before the war. However, popular support of Communism among Jews ran much higher, though it was certainly not widespread. According to historian Peter D. Stachura,

> Only a small percentage of the Jewish community had been members of the Communist Party of Poland (KPP) during the inter-war era, though they had occupied an influential and conspicuous place in the party's leadership and in the rank and file in major centres, such as Warsaw, Łódź and Lwów. But a far greater number of younger Jews, often through the pro-Marxist *Bund* (General Jewish Workers' Union) or some Zionist groups, had possessed an underlying sympathy for Communism and an affinity with Soviet Russia, both of which had been, of course, prime enemies of the Polish Second Republic. For these Jews Communism had an almost messianic appeal, while the Soviet Union was regarded as their natural homeland. As a result of these ideological, political and anti-Polish factors they found it easy after 1939 to join the Soviet bandwagon in Eastern Poland, and soon occupied prominent positions in industry, schools, local government, police and other Soviet-installed institutions. They went about their business with revolutionary zeal and an [sic] consuming hatred for all things Polish. As Soviet-Bolshevik commissars, they were the most

> fanatical. Hence, the argument thattheir frenzied participation in the new Soviet administration was motivated by gratitude for being saved from the Nazis is patently unconvincing.

The accounts cited in this study fully bear out that, in September 1939, pro-Soviet sentiments became far more encompassing and even extended to Zionists. In light of this evidence, it is difficult to quarrel with one authoritative wartime estimate that perhaps thirty percent of the Jewish population of the Eastern Borderlands identified with the new regime.

Dov Levin advances the following explanation for the clashes between the Poles and Jews at the time of the Soviet entry:

> Polish antisemites found this an opportune time to settle scores with the Jews. As vestigial units of the Polish army fled into Romania, they savaged any Jews who happened to be in the way, especially after they discovered that the Soviet forces were closing in from the east. The pretext for this behavior was their association of Jews with the Bolsheviks and their belief that the Jews had "stabbed Poland in the back."

While it is true that turbulence and lawlessness soared as the Polish state was collapsing and the resultant power vacuum provided criminal elements, mostly non-Poles, with an opportunity to rob Polish estates and Jewish shops, the testimonies gathered in this volume shed an entirely different light on this period. There were no random attacks of any significance carried out by Poles, whether soldiers or civilians, on the Jewish population. On the contrary, there are scores of reports of Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Jewish snipers firing at Polish soldiers; hundreds of bodies of Polish soldiers murdered by their fellow Polish citizens lay strewn throughout this region. In many localities, these minorities seized control of the administration, disarmed Polish policemen, arrested Polish officials and even attacked the Polish army.

The Stepań memorial book offers a somewhat selective description of the armed rebellion staged in that town by local Ukrainians and Jews on the eve of the Soviet invasion. While attempting to exonerate the Jewish participants and stressing the retaliation of the Polish forces, the account nonetheless concedes that the Polish response was not sweeping and wanton, but rather focused on those believed responsible for the shooting and tempered by the local Polish population who were quite capable of distinguishing between fifth columnists and ordinary Jews and Ukrainians. Indeed, a delegation led by the Catholic priest convinced the Polish military officials to let most of those seized go free. The description of the Poles' reaction to the treachery in ***Stepań,*** in Volhynia, penned by a Jewish eyewitness is hardly damning:

> The Ukrainians in our town and in the nearby surroundings raised their heads with their great hatred for the Poles, they took arms and rebelled. They took over the police station, the government buildings, and the whole town very quickly. When they heard that the Russians were approaching, they raised red flags, even though their real intention was nationalistic. It turned out that the Polish guard force [*Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza*], which guarded the Russian-Polish border, retreated from the Russian border in the west direction, and had to go through our town. The Ukrainians,

who did not have a great amount of weapons, organized themselves on the hills near the river on one side of the bridge, and came toward the Polish army, who retreated with gunshots.

A night of terror fell upon the people of the town, and I remember how the bullets whistled by us. … until sunrise, the time the shooting stopped and the Polish army retreated to the town. … The Polish soldiers roamed the streets of the town in search of rebels … They approached the door of our apartment, and ordered all the tenants of the house to go outside. … with our hands above our heads … we walked to the Market Square under heavy guard. There we joined a group of Jews and Ukrainians who were organized in a long line in which there were on both sides of them rows of soldiers with rifles … They aimed the rifles at the Communist traitors. …

We stood there … there appeared a high officer accompanied by a Pole from Stepan, the son of Roman Hakolbasnik. He was the one who sorted out the guilty and the innocent. Because he knew us well, he said we were innocent, as he decided for most of the Jews, except a few young Jews. … The few Ukrainians and Jews that were not freed were chained and led outside of the city to be brought to trial for rebellion and treason. Their end was of course death.

Immediately after the evacuation of the army, the distinguished people of the town met: Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews. They thought how to save those who were taken who really had no part in the uprising. Then it was decided to send a delegation of Polish teachers and at their head the Catholic priest, in search of the army that had retreated, in order to convince the generals. … This delegation was successful in releasing all the Jewish boys and even the Ukrainians. A number of Ukrainians were tortured and killed by shooting. … When the Soviets entered, the Ukrainians took revenge on the son of Roman Hakolbasnik and informed on him and expelled him and his family … to Siberia. This was in spite of the fact that many had much sympathy for him as he saved many from death." [According to Polish sources, Bolesław Roman, the Pole who identified the armed rebels, was denounced by Ukrainians, arrested and executed.]

Within a day or two after the Polish Army left the town, … a rumor spread in the morning that the "Bolsheviks" were coming. We, the children, pushed our way to the head of a large group of Ukrainians and Jews toward the bridge to see the "Bolsheviks". …

A delegation of the honorable people of the town walked toward them and received them with bread and salt … The crowd received them with cheers and clapping of hands. …

Several days after the entrance of the Army, people of the civilian regime came and began to organize the town. The "small-Soviet" was formed. This was the town council whose real leaders were the craftsmen—the proletarians amongst the Jews. A militia was formed which was headed by a Soviet police officer.

There was no marked antagonism between Poles and Jews under the Soviet occupation. The author of the above account recalled that his father was able to switch Saturday for Sunday at work and attend synagogue "since the head of the office was not a confirmed communist, but a local Pole, an acquaintance of my father from before the war." Moreover, there was no Polish revenge at the time of the German invasion in June 1941.

Throughout Eastern Poland, Polish landlords and settlers were attacked by Ukrainians and Belorussians, and Polish (and Jewish) refugees, fleeing for their lives between two hostile fronts, were frequently set

upon by robbers and nationalist gangs. Thousands of Poles (as many as 15,000 according to some estimates) fell victim to these widespread assaults at the hands of their non-Polish neighbours. It was to this reality that Poles had to respond.

Thus, by and large the conflict arose because of the open collaboration on the part of members of the ethnic minorities, among them many Jews, with the Soviet invaders at a time when the Polish army was still fighting the Germans. Many, but certainly not all or even most of these actors were Communists—many were simply pro-Soviet or anti-Polish. However, that was not necessarily the norm for the behaviour of Jews and other minorities. In a few towns, such as Gwoździec and Zabłudów, Jews served in defence committees formed by the Polish municipal authorities to maintain order after the departure of the Polish military and police. In the small town of Krasne near Mołodeczno, on the prewar Polish-Soviet border, one of the last acts of a local Jew was to deliver to a Polish army commander a suitcase with a large sum of money donated by Jews for Poland's National Defence Fund.

The contrast was particularly striking in ***Wasilków***, located in the predominantly Polish province of Białystok. Local Poles and Jews formed a committee with representatives of both groups to prevent chaos during the period between the collapse of Polish civil authority and the arrival of the Germans. At that time its members reportedly wore a white armband to indicate their "neutrality," but no one greeted or collaborated with the German invaders. The Germans arrested a number of Jewish and Polish onlookers and looted shops in the town before they left, but the Poles were not implicated in these abuses. However, when the Russians arrived soon after, the mood changed and the paths of the two communities—Poles and Jews—diverged radically.

> Mordechai Yurowietski the tinsmith's son, raised a red flag on top of the fire station tower.
>
> Leaflets dropped by an aeroplane proclaimed "brothers and sisters of West Byelo-Russia. On Comrade Stalin's instructions, the Red Army is coming to your assistance…"
>
> A militia was quickly established by the left wing elements in the town. The streets were full of people [Jews and some Belorussians] laughing and chattering in holiday mood. No one wanted to go home in the evening for fear of an opportunity to welcome the Red Army. Only late in the evening, did a black limousine slowly drive into town. It stopped and one of the men inside asked in Russian for directions to the house of Pan Wasilkowski. Wasilkowski worked as a machinist in a tannery factory owned by the Barasch brothers. The NKVD had a strange way of dealing with their agents.
>
> The next morning, the army arrived. The troops were quartered on the town. Each morning, they would march through the streets to their field kitchens singing heartily. Youngsters would follow after them and sing along when they could. These songs became very popular, especially "Katiusha". …
>
> Cultural life was regulated by an official seconded from Minsk. This was a middle aged Jewish woman … when the Russians decided to turn the main synagogue into a club … we protested to the cultural official who was Jewish. She insisted that she could do nothing and suggested that we approach the political commissar. He had a Jewish sounding name. He bragged that it was he who

had suggested the conversion of the synagogue but he finally relented and left it untouched.

There is simply no evidence to support Dov Levin's fanciful claim that the Polish army, in which thousands of Jews also served, seized the opportunity to "savage" every Jew they encountered. Although individual army deserters and other undisciplined elements may well have engaged sporadically in criminal activities—primarily robberies and looting—once the Polish army began to disintegrate and the local Polish authorities collapsed or fled in the face of an imminent foreign takeover, certainly not all or even a large number of the soldiers took part in such excesses which, in any event, targeted various groups including Poles.

A far more plausible description of the circumstances surrounding the clashes that ensued in various locations in Eastern Poland was provided in a 1988 study by Jan Tomasz Gross, though he neglected to mention the Jewish component: the actions of "the so-called ethnic minorities—Ukrainians and Belorussians in particular—who reportedly ambushed small groups of Polish soldiers … and who assaulted local Polish communities and functionaries of the now defunct state administration" provoked a backlash against these hostile elements. Indeed, Polish accounts confirm that assaults directed at Poles were frequent. As could be expected, some Poles retaliated against such assaults and against attempts to disarm them, as would any army.

Jewish participation in such events, however, is downplayed by Gross. Moreover, some of his conclusions about Jewish conduct are tenuous at best. For example, he contends that "the triumphal arches and peasant militias were not meant to spite or challenge the old regime, but rather to welcome or ingratiate with the new." Clearly, they served both functions. The welcome extended to the Soviets was usually accompanied by anti-Polish rhetoric and spontaneous arrests of Polish officials and military personnel by local collaborators. Anti-German agitation was not to be heard.

For that reason, and for the reasons delineated by Polish historian Teresa Prekerowa later in the text, one must also dismiss David Engel's thesis that the Jews simply welcomed the Soviets "as a liberating rather than conquering force," and that the Jewish reaction can be attributed entirely to the apprehended threat to their physical safety represented by the Germans. The copious testimonies gathered in this study point to other, often more significant, factors at play.

As for the claim that the Jews formed self-defence units merely to stave off pogroms directed at the Jewish population, it has been noted earlier that the attacks (mostly robberies and looting) were perpetrated by various factions, mainly criminal and mostly non-Polish. They occurred during a time of strife and growing anarchy, when Poland's civil authorities and police agencies were rapidly disintegrating in the face of invasions from all sides, and targeted Poles as well as Jews. Nor does Gross adequately address the armed rebellions and the anti-Polish excesses that the Jewish militia all too frequently engaged in on their own volition even before the arrival of Soviet troops.

It must be borne in mind that a great deal of the social unrest on the part of the ethnic minorities in the Eastern Borderlands was the direct result of Soviet propaganda and agitation. Thousands of leaflets were dropped and distributed urging Ukrainian and Belorussian peasants to take up "arms, scythes, pitchforks

and axes" against their "age-old enemies—the Polish *Pans*." Thus there was a clear signal from the Soviet invaders that Poles could be attacked with impunity. An eyewitness from Volhynia reported:

> We soon discovered that the rumors about Bolsheviks coming to aid us were false. Even before entering the city the Soviet planes dropped leaflets (which I saw with my own eyes) inciting peasants to occupy the estates of landowners, to beat them up, etc. We stayed in our homes as the peasantry, agitated, went out looting. The Bolsheviks established order as soon as they entered.

After consolidating their power, in order to distance themselves from these acts which they had incited, the Soviet authorities issued a proclamation denouncing the activities of "Ukrainian nationalists" who, as "enemies of Soviet authority," carried out "pogroms" against the Jews and Poles. The "enemies," the proclamation reiterated, were "landowners and capitalists … of all nations." The pattern of inciting violence and then restoring order as "protectors"of the population was one used by both the Soviets and Nazis in September 1939 and again in June and July 1941.

In the German zone at that time, German authorities also initiated and encouraged lawlessness in the early days of the occupation. A Jew from ***Majdan Kolbuszewski***, in south-central Poland, reported as follows:

> When the war broke out and German planes appeared that dropped a few bombs, the village was panic-stricken. Fortunately bombs fell in the fields and they didn't damage anything in the village. Nevertheless, people were leaving the village in a state of panic, moving to other places. After a few days, Germans arrived. Jews hid away. They ran to neighboring villages looking for hiding places with peasants they knew. The majority of Jews indeed found shelter in the villages … We stayed there for a few days … Seeing that the situation is prolonging, we decided to return home at night. At home we found the doors to be open and a looted apartment. Germans took our radio, a new wardrobe, and best clothing, and they turned the whole apartment upside down.
>
> During those few days that we spent in the countryside, Germans did things in Majdan their own way. Some most respected Jews and Poles they led out of town, and they tormented the rest of the population, dragging them to work and beating them without mercy.

In ***Szczebrzeszyn***, a town southeast of Lublin that passed hands several times, the German authorities actively incited the local riff-raff to take part in the looting of shops and homes. Zygmunt Klukowski described these events in his diary as follows:

> [September 20, 1939]: Yesterday, a general destruction and looting of the stores took place, Polish and Jewish. But since there are more Jewish establishments than Polish, the common statement was, "They are plundering the Jews."
>
> The usual routine went like this. A few German soldiers would enter the open stores and, after taking some items for themselves, start throwing everything else out into the street. There some people waited to grab whatever they could. These people are from the city and also neighboring

villages. Then they would take their loot home, and the soldiers would move on to the next store. If the doors were locked, the German soldiers broke in and the destruction went even faster.

Some private apartments [for the most part vacated, according to the Polish original—*M.P.*] were robbed also. The Germans would especially look for good liquor, tobacco, cigarettes, and silverware. From the pharmacy they took morphine and other narcotics.

[September 23]: In the city looting is taking place everywhere. … The German military police, instead of trying to prevent these crimes, seem to be on the side of the robbers and looters.

With the arrival of the Soviets in Szczebrzeszyn on September 27 and 28, 1939, the focus of the robberies shifted: the targets were now Polish soldiers who, as we have seen, were robbed by local Communists (mainly Jews), and the large Polish estates.

But, one should not jump to the conclusion that looting was the exclusive domain of non-Jews. Numerous examples of Jews engaging in such activities have already been provided. Non-Jewish sources attest to the massive scale of looting on the Soviet retreat in June 1941 by members of all nationalities. Occasionally, we find glimpses of the true extent of this phenomenon in Jewish sources, though Jewish memoirs are on the whole reluctant to speak of such actvities by co-religionists without, at the same time, justifying them.

Bielsk Podlaski: When the Russians fled the town [in June 1941] they left, in their great haste, storehouses filled with merchandise and foodstuffs. The Jews took from these stores various items for the hard times we all knew would come, and anyway, had we not taken these abandoned goods, they would have been looted by peasants or thieves.

Sokoły: There also were Jews who carried leftovers [i.e., possessions] from the [Soviet] officers' empty houses.

Kobryń: The day the Russians left, the people, Jews and non-Jews, burst open all the Russian warehouses and took all the goods and the food from there while the Germans watched.

Słonim: … the rabble, composed of Belorussian, Jewish and Polish dregs, rushed to rob the stores and storehouses, which was interrupted by the arrival of the German soldiers. … They robbed everything they could, and in the horrible tumult one could make out entire caravans of robbers with stolen bundles.

Złoczów: I saw a motley mob, perhaps a hundred people, rushing in and out of the government stores across the street. These were looters. There was a bearded Jew in the crowd …

A German military vehicle drove up; two noncommissioned officers jumped out, and without a word of warning one of them pulled out a revolver and started shooting at the crowd.

There are similar accounts from other places.

Reports like this are not at all unusual during wartime. Looting by Allied forces began even before the German frontier was crossed in 1945. American reports confirmed that pillage of Belgian civilian property by U.S. troops did in fact take place on a considerable scale. Once in Germany looting became a full-blown epidemic. In wartime Britain, as Norman Davies points out, the problem became critical despite the fact that there was no occupation or breakdown of state apparatus.

> Looting occurred as soon as the bombs of the Blitz began to fall. Bombed houses were raided. Valuables disappeared. Carpets and lead pipes were ripped out. In the first prosecutions in November 1940, it was members of the ARP and of the AFS who faced the charges. The blackout created ideal conditions for burglars, pickpockets and rapists. Offences proliferated as the rate of police successes dropped.
>
> Fraudulent claims provided another problem. People who had lost their home were entitled to a £500 advance on post-war compensation up to £20,000. People who took in evacuees or service personnel were entitled to payment of 10*s.* 6*d.* per week. The National Assistance Office was swamped with claimants, and found it easier to pay than to verify.
>
> A British MP called black-marketeering 'treason of the worst kind'. But, with food, fuel and clothes rationing in force, illegal trade of all sorts flourished. In Glasgow, many people died from drinking home-brewed 'hooch'.
>
> Murders in England and Wales increased by 22 per cent. The increase was partly due to the ready supply of firearms, and partly to opportunism. Bombed-out ruins provided good cover for murderers, who sought to disguise their prey as Blitz victims.

During the racial strife that continues to erupt cyclically in the United States looting invariably takes on massive dimensions. Moreover, the situation in Poland in September 1939, during the absence of civil authorities, pales in comparison with the anarchy that ensued in the wake of Hurricane Katrina which ravaged New Orleans in August 2005. There, a mass of ordinary looters and street gangs left the police helpess to cope with conditions reminiscent of the Third World.

As for the allegation found in Holocaust literature that looting of abandoned Jewish property (mostly by the poor rabble) is irrefutable proof of criminal anti-Semitism, Ludwik Hirszfeld offers a different perspective based on his wartime experiences:

> The Varsovians who had to hide out in the countryside after the [failed 1944] uprising experienced a similar [fate]. The pillage of possessions by the Polish rabble was widespread. Only during one period were its sole victims Jews. That this anti-humanitarian attitude was facilitated by a certain philosophy of life is clear, but one should not lay the blame for it on [Polish] society. … Polish anti-Semitism is not the culprit, rather the German authorities.

Numerous incidents cited in this this text point to striking similarities between conditions in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland and those prevailing in the German zone of occupation. In many ways, the role of

local collaborators with the Soviets mirrored that of the German fifth column. A book published early in the war for the Polish Ministry of Information, titled *The German Fifth Column in Poland,* documents analogous forms of conduct by members of Poland's German minority:

> It is striking that preparations for sabotage and diversionist activities were carried out everywhere in an identical manner and according to a single plan. In was so in Bydgoszcz [cf. Grodno], and also at Lodz [Łódź], where, as soon as they had news of the approach of the German troops, the diversionist agents assembled in the forests of Tomaszow [Tomaszów] and fired on the Polish soldiers. The same thing occurred in Silesia and in many other localities throughout Poland.
>
> But there was also the active contribution which the army of spies made to the Germans in this unequal struggle. These Polish citizens of German nationality were active all over the Polish territory …
>
> Of course, not all Germans in Poland participated in these subversive activities, but practically all the German organizations, except for certain Catholic and Socialist groups, were dominated by elements with a traitorous attitude to the Polish State.
>
> This treachery was all the easier, since the German colonists scattered over the country were not only organized in various legal societies and bodies, but were to be found in every sphere of social life.
>
> It is sufficient to state that in September, 1939, a certain relatively small number of Germans were shot in execution of sentences of courts martial. Those sentenced to death were not "innocent members of the German minority," as the official Nazi propaganda thesis would have it. They were spies, saboteurs, and diversionists, caught red-handed.
>
> Thus the Polish soldiers had to fight against the invader not only on the battle-front. Wherever Germans were to be found, … whether in large or small numbers, they fired at the Polish soldiers at night, they burned down the buildings in which the troops were quartered, they cut the telephone wires.
>
> German diversionists organized a rising in Bydgoszcz [cf. Grodno] … this attempt was partly suppressed the same day in the centre of the town.
>
> The first deposition comes from an English lady, Miss Baker-Beall, who was living at Bydgoszcz at the beginning of the war. …
>
> "Evidently large quantities of arms, rifles, and machine-guns had been smuggled across the frontier and concealed in the town or its environs, for from this day on the Germans in large numbers began sniping from the windows of German houses and flats, and continued it day and night till the entry of the German forces; from the third day on they also did machine-gunning from the roofs, and fired upon everything, men, women, horses (fortunately children were seldom in the streets). …
>
> "After this the civilian guards arrested all Germans whom they found with arms in their

possession and they were shot out of hand."

"Immediately after their entry [i.e. of German troops into Bydgoszcz], the massacres of the Polish population commenced. Without trial, and often in a revolting manner, the Germans shot a great number of the most prominent citizens of the town, among them several women and priests, as well as the members of the civic guard organized by the population after the retreat of the Polish troops."

"In the localities of Izabelow [Izabelów] and Annopol (close to Zdunska [Zduńska] Wola) shots were fired by the German civilian populations against detachments of the 10th Division."

"Also in districts behind the front we were fired on at night, and always where there were German colonies, even in the neighbourhood of Warsaw."

All these police officials, Germans who had passed themselves off as Poles, assisted the occupation authorities in the work of "cleansing" the territory of undesirable elements by denouncing Poles living in the area.

Another deposition mentions the names of Germans who were outstanding in this regard at Koscian [Kościan].

"Among the Germans of particular 'merit' must be mentioned the Gestapo detachment, the magistrate Lize, Burgomaster Schreiter, the former Burgomaster Heinze, who was afterwards appointed school inspector, the landowener Lorenty, the official Ischdonat.

"The German population of the district took an active part in all the persecutions. One person who particularly distinguished herself was Frau von Hofmannswaldau of Koszanowo, near Smigiel [Śmigiel], who was continually importuning the Gestapo and the magistrate with demands to proceed to further executions."

Such examples could be added to without end. They testify to the fact that the German minority in Poland did not cease its treacherous activities when the German troops occupied Poland. Besides openly organizing themselves into the structure of the Third Reich, they proceeded to help in the extermination of the Polish population, exposing them to terrible atrocities and to the bestialities of the Gestapo.

This procedure is still going on. Though many months have passed since Germany's treacherous aggression against Poland, aided by the treachery of the German minority within Poland, not a day passes undisturbed by the groans of Poles martyred and condemned to terrible suffering by the Reich's spies and informers, citizens of the Polish State.

Since the German occupation of Poland the Reich authorities have been brutally deporting the Polish elements from their age-old homes in the "incorporated" territories. At night the Gestapo agents drive thousands of Polish families from their houses and dwellings, allowing them to take only a small suitcase and fifty marks per person. Everything else: land, house, dwellings and all the

> furniture, clothing, linen, ready money, and even family keepsakes, are pillaged without compensation. The evicted people are carried in cattle trucks to the "General Gouvernement," where they are turned out at a wayside station without food, without money, and with no roof over their heads. Frequently this journey lasted several days or more; during the hard winter of 1939–40 thousands of people, especially women and children, were frozen to death on such journeys.
>
> Throughout all occupied Poland there have been terrible massacres of innocent people, while tens of thousands of people are being tortured in prisons and concentration camps.
>
> All Polish cultural life has been completely suppressed. The Polish universities and high schools have been closed; the Polish libraries, museums, art galleries and scientific laboratories have been stripped, and their more valuable possessions carried off to Germany. Polish national and religious monuments have been destroyed. In the "incorporated" areas all Polish inscriptions have been removed. Both Catholic and Protestant churches have to endure terrible persecution. Hundreds of clergy have been shot or tortured to death in prisons and concentration camps.

This book also contains two photographs with captions that could, *mutatis mutandis,* be found in a book dealing with Soviet collaborators:

> Leaders of the German minority in Poland decorated by Hitler with gold medals for their fifth column activities.
>
> Death faces the Polish policeman who is being pointed out to a Nazi soldier by a member of the German minority in Poland.

Some historians have attempted to advance the theory that the reason that the Poles became incensed at Jews is not so much because of the conduct and activities of all too many Jews in the service of the Soviet invaders, but simply because some Jews were given positions that previously were (allegedly) denied to them. While playing down Jewish involvement in the Soviet takeover to a minimum, Martin Dean, a research scholar at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies (at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.) writes repeatedly:

> For many it was particularly surprising *to see* Jews serving as policemen on the streets. For some Poles, who had lost their former pre-eminence, this was a particular provocation and added fuel to the latent anti-Semitism of the interwar period.
>
> Nevertheless, it was precisely the *sight of a few* Jews in the police and administration which rankled amongst Poles, Ukrainians and Belorussians, for whom this was previously unthinkable.
>
> For many Poles the *perception* of some Jews taking their places as adminstrators and even policemen was a particular affront. They chose to overlook the fact that Soviet repression affected Jewish businesses, organizations and refugees as harshly as the Poles. (Emphases added.)

Similar views have been advanced in recent years by Jan T. Gross, for whom *alleged* Jewish collaboration is also all a matter of perception, reinforced by conventions and stereotypes on the part of Poles:

> Jews were not involved, except sporadically, in the Soviet-sponsored apparatus of administration in the villages (i.e., where the vast majority of the local population lived at the time). … there *were* Jews in the Soviet administrative apparatus, in the economic bureaucracy, or in the local militia … But that they were remembered so vividly and with such scorn does not tell us that Jews were massively involved in collaboration, but rather of how unseemly, how jarring, how offensive it was to see a Jew in *any* position of authority—as an engineer, a foreman, an accountant, a civil servant, a teacher, or a militiaman.

As we have seen in the contemporary accounts cited earlier on in the text, many Jewish eyewitnesses whose testimony is difficult to dismiss so glibly also succumbed to this same "perception." Moreover, these scholars do not appear to realize that Jews were well represented in local governments in the interwar period and occupied important positions, civic and others, in all of the towns in Eastern Poland. For example, according to the Szczuczyn memorial book, Jews occupied 16 out of 24 seats in the town council. It is true, however, that few of them served as policemen and municipal clerks, but they were present there as they were in the courthouses and on the staff of schools and hospitals. In Przemyśl, for example, Jews who had held positions in the Polish government apparatus were dismissed by the Soviets from the municipal administration along with Poles. Moreover, Jews were especially prominent in the liberal professions and, as Jewish sources readily admit, owned most of the prosperous private businesses.

There are many Jewish accounts from Eastern Poland attesting to the fact that, for the most part, interaction between Poles and Jews was quite uneventful, even distantly cordial. Relations between Poles and Jews were not on the verge of exploding in the prewar period, nor did they in September 1939 when the Soviets invaded Eastern Poland: by and large Poles did not use either the entry of the Germans or the Soviets to strike at Jews. A typical case is ***Podwołoczyska***, near the Soviet border, described in that town's memorial book as follows:

> The Jews of the town lived harmoniously with their Polish neighbors. There were no quarrels or fights between them or public outbursts of anti-Semitism. …
>
> The Jewish population was divided into three levels. About 15% were wealthy, about 40% were middle-class, and the remaining 45% became impoverished due to the inflation and difficult conditions of the years before World War II. …
>
> For a long time Dr. Rosensweig was the railroad doctor for the town. Her husband, Dr. Leon Rosensweig and Dr. Bruno Perchip, a reserve army Captain, and Dr. Gabriel Friedman served the Jewish and Polish populations of the town ...
>
> Jews and Poles would meet on the town tennis court. Dr. Perchip and his wife would meet the town officers from the border town for a game of tennis.
>
> At the municipal courthouse … Jewish and Polish judges and clerks worked side by side. Among

> them were the Jews Fogel and Ashkenazi. The Jewish notary public Landsberg was the only notary in town qualified as a court supervisor. The "Palestra" [bar] was comprised almost exclusively of Jewish attorneys: Dr. Orbach, Dr. Cohen, Dr. Gabriel Finkelstein, and Dr. Sbalter …
>
> The town was run by the Polish mayor Bordavcik and the vice-mayor, Dr. Leon Rosensweig. Members of the town council were democratically elected by the residents relative to their numbers. Among the Jewish clerks were Shlomo Wallach …
>
> The commander of the joint Russian-Polish patrol abroad, from the Polish side, was the Jewish Captain Shenkel …
>
> Most of the middle-class [Jewish] families were fairly well off. They did not own cars or carriages, but they owned a nice sized home and made a living. Most of the wealthy families dealt in trade. …
>
> Rabbi Babad was one of Poland's three chief rabbis. … When he walked on the street, even the Poles would clear the way out of respect for him.

It was not, therefore, the fact that some Jews occupied some administrative positions under Soviet rule that caused widespread resentment, but rather because Jews along with other minorities had immediately flocked to occupy virtually all of the positions from which Poles were systemically removed. Moreover, they often used their newly-acquired positions to the detriment of the Poles. In particular, Poles were incensed by the harassment and persecution meted out to them all-too-frequently by Jews serving in the militia and other state offices, as well as by the anti-Polish agitation in which many Jews openly engaged. Finally, as pointed out by Jan Karski, it was the legions of denouncers among the Jews whose activities were lethal for many Poles and left an indelible mark on Polish public opinion. As one Jewish black marketeer candidly explained to a Polish officer who found himself in the Wilno region soon after Poland's collapse,

> "They don't like Jews on the Soviet side [of the border]. They are unclean there. They denounced many Poles to the communists, a lot of Jews are now militiamen, and even reeves. The state offices are full of them."

After what the Poles had experienced at the hands of the Soviets and their local collaborators is it little wonder that many of them were initially prepared to welcome the Germans in June 1941 (though *not* in September 1939) as the lesser evil, and therefore as "liberators" from those who would ship them off to the Gulag? At that time Poles in the Soviet zone had little knowledge of what was going on in the German zone since the Soviet media did not report on their Nazi ally's misdeeds. The Holocaust was yet to get underway, while the last round of deportations to the Gulag and large-scale executions of political prisoners had just taken place in the Soviet zone. Like the Jews, many Poles expected conditions as they had been under German occupation in World War I.

However, for those Jewish memoirists who seek to justify Jewish behaviour at every turn and suffer from amnesia regarding conditions for Poles in the Soviet zone (and the conduct of Jews in September 1939 and

the role played by Jewish collaborators), it is the Poles who are accused of about opportunism. Jacob Gerstenfeld-Maltiel from ***Lwów*** is one such memoirist:

> The population greeted the marching [German] soldiers [in June 1941] with cries and applause and even threw flowers to them. These were not only Ukrainians. Most of the people on the streets were in fact Poles; the Ukrainians, a minority in Lvov, were lost in the crowds. It is strange how men can manage to forget so quickly, or shall we put the blame on the unconscious? National consciousness is very strong in Poles, but opportunism prefers to be on the side of the strong and to forget dreams of being a major power. The majority was opportunistic and listened to its perhaps not honourable, but surely more convenient promptings.

These ruminations ring hollow. The Soviet invasion of Eastern Poland in September 1939 and the German invasion of that same territory in June 1941 (to seize it from their erstwhile partner in crime) were hardly equivalent acts. The invasion of September 1939 was directed at the very existence of the Polish state and, at the very least, its citizens should have remained neutral when it soon became apparent that the Soviets had entered Poland not to defend the country and her citizens from German aggression, but to enslave Poland and eradicate its officials and military. If, later on, large cross-sections of the Jewish population who initially greeted the Soviets had a change of heart, it was only because they too, unexpectedly, fell victim to Soviet persecution.

On the other hand, in June 1941 Poles had every right to prefer one occupier over another, given their experiences under Soviet rule. Politically, the outbreak of a Soviet-German was a *sine qua non* for the ultimate liberation of Poland, which remained the Poles' common and unrelenting goal. It did not take a particularly astute observer to realize that the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact had sealed Poland's fate, and that the German invasion of the Soviet Union now reopened it. Moreover, the Poles did not regard as permanent overlords and their "welcome" was purely reactive and not tainted ideologically. There was no display of swastikas or pro-Nazi demonstrations by Poles similar to the profusion of red armbands and political rallies that accompanied the Soviet invasion in September 1939. Besides, as Jan T. Gross argues, "one should hardly expect local youth, in some godforsaken backwater, to quietly sit at home when an army goes by their little hamlet and does not kill or rob anybody!"

By that time, as a number of testimonies show, even many Jews had had enough of the Bolshevik regime, which was uniformly despised by Poles, and hardly anyone anticipated the Holocaust. A Jewish woman from ***Uhnów*** near Lwów recalled:

> All these restrictions so depressed the economy that they made life [under the Soviets] unbearable. Ironically, the Jewish community pinned their hopes on the Germans, because until 1941, no one knew that they—the Germans—were even worse than the Russians. Until 1941, no one was aware that the Germans were executing Jews.

The son of a well-to-do family in ***Lwów*** recalled:

> My parents' sad experience during the past two years caused them to think differently. They were happy at the sight of the Soviet retreat. Of course, they had heard about the Nazis and their antisemitism. … But in their minds the Germans were a civilized nation. …
>
> The German Army reached Lwow on June 28th, and on June 29th the town was theirs. They marched in singing and smiling. They were greeted with enthusiasm by an elated Ukrainian population. Girls in traditional Ukrainian dresses embraced the soldiers and showered them with flowers. After looking at the celebrations through the window for a while, my brother and I went down to the street, for a better view. A number of youths spotted us, recognized us as Jews, and greeted us with curses and stones. We retreated back home.

The wife of an attorney in ***Przemyśl*** reflected on the departure of the Soviets:

> "Oh, what luck that those primitives (the Soviets) are gone, now we have *Kulturträger* [carrier of culture]; they can't do us any harm. Perhaps things won't be all that good, but at least we'll be dealing with people of culture."

In ***Tłumacz***, "Jews whispered that, with the help of the Almighty, the Germans would come and deal the 'foniye' (Russian) an overwhelming blow." A Jewish doctor in ***Tłuste*** recalled that two Jewish doctors, refugees from Kraków, who had been give good positions, continually tried to return to their homes in German-occupied Poland. According to him, "more than one person who had initially been a great enthusiast of the Soviets now thanked God that the German-Soviet war had broken out."

In ***Iwie*** (Iwje), a young Communist activist, who recalled the Stalinist period with fondness, was shocked to find that prewar Jewish merchants and businessmen "were happy about the defeat of the Red Army." Moreover, "the poor people truly believed nothing would happen to them, that they would manage." According to Jew from ***Stołpce***, "My father was in such despair over the Russians that he actually believed that things would be better if the Germans invaded eastern Poland and drove the Communists out."

In ***Kurzeniec***,

> Some Jews observed the arrival of the German soldiers, and I was among them. The fact that they crossed town and didn't strike anyone encouraged us. Someone said: "They passed and didn't cause us any harm; maybe the monster is not so bad."

In ***Pohost Zahorodny*** (or Pohost Zahorodzki) in Polesia,

> There was the long-established stereotype of the Russians as a backward, anti-Semitic country, with rioting mobs, unruly Cossacks and government-instigated *pogroms.* Germany stood for the civilized West and the rule of law. … Particularly among the older members of the population, the stereotypes persisted and convinced many to stay. The rich even hoped the Germans would restore

> their wealth and property, end the food shortages, confiscation of property and arbitrary arrests. Many looked forward to the withdrawal of the Soviets. …
>
> Most Jews understood they would suffer under German rule, but they never considered it could mean complete annihilation.

In ***Drohiczyn Poleski***,

> Only a few people fled—those who were specifically connected to the Soviet authorities and the NKVD… These included the teacher Yachas (born in Svislotch [Świsłocz]), the photographer Yisrael Schwartz (son of Moshe Schwartz), the chairman of the shoemakers' workshop, Rubinstein, the printer Orliansky and Ukrainetz, and finally the daughter of Yeshayahu the Tailor. …
>
> The first Jewish victims [of the German assault on the Soviets] fell by nightfall, even before the Germans were in full control. R. Yaakov Vermus (brother-in-law of Rabbi Eliyahu Velvel Altvarg) and his eldest son died on Wednesday [June 25, 1941] night in a tragic error. A group of retreating Soviet soldiers shot them in their home as they greeted the Germans [sic] advance team, calling out "Communists are kaput!"

According to an account from ***Rokitno***, in Volhynia,

> A terrible panic erupted. The Soviet government clerks packed their belongings and fled. Some Jews followed them. Unfortunately, many refused to run away since they thought their life would be better under the Germans than under the Soviets.

In ***Boremel***, in Volhynia, some Jews even gathered alongside the Ukrainians, who had erected an *arc de triomphe* to greet the invading Germans in June 1941, only to be driven away by the Ukrainians and Germans.

In ***Kamionka***, a small town in Eastern Galicia, a Jewish delegation handed the following note to a visiting German dignitary, Friedrich Theodor Prince zu Sayn und Wittgenstein, in the late summer of 1941:

> We, the old, established residents of the town of Kamenka [Kamionka], in the name of the Jewish population, welcome your arrival, Serene Highness and heir to your ancestors, in whose shadow the Jews, our ancestors and we, have lived in the greatest welfare. We wish you, too, long life and happiness. We hope that also in the future the Jewish population shall live on your estate in peace and quiet under your protection, considering the sympathy which the Jewish population has always extended to your most distinguished family.

Historian Raul Hilberg notes that the prince was unmoved. The Jews, he said, were a "great evil." Although he had no authority to impose any solutions upon his greeters, he instructed the local mayor to mark the Jews with a star and to employ them without pay in hard labour.

Another example of the distortions that abound in Jewish historiography can be found in the writings of many historians who purge key passages from Jan Karski's famous report (reproduced and referred to

above) about conditions in the Soviet zone that are unfavourable to Jews, and basically strive to whitewash Jewish conduct. On the other hand, they have no qualms about latching on to speculation (not observations) offered up by Karski about possibile future revenge by Poles—a "repayment in blood"—not as a figurative, and justified, barometer of the sense of outrage at the "very frequent" acts of betrayal Karski reported, but as a theme by which to gauge Polish conduct under the subsequent German occupation. However, widespread revenge by and large did not occur, even though the Poles had ample opportunity to strike at the Jews when the Soviets fled. Most Poles simply did not view Jews *en bloc* as Soviet collaborators, despite German incitements. Wacław Śledziński, a native of Warsaw, recalls the following scene that took place in Lwów, the very city that Karski visited before he wrote his famous report, in July 1941:

> The day after my arrival at Lwow a bomb burst. That is to say, the Germans announced that in Brygidki Prison they had found the bodies of thousands of murdered Poles and Ukrainians, buried in layers upon the prison yard. They also said they had found some cells walled up, with bodies inside. The news ran through the town like wildfire. But that wasn't enough for the Germans. They declared that it was the Jews who had instigated the murders, and the Jews who must bear the responsibility for them.
>
> Accordingly, Jew-hunts commenced the very next morning. Large numbers of Germans and Ukrainians with fire-arms, iron crowbars, knuckle-dusters and truncheons proceeded to call the Jews to bloody account. Every quarter of the city became the scene of massacre. Thousands of Jews were beaten to death. Many were thrown from high windows, many were hanged on trees or lamp-posts. Meanwhile the Germans threw open the gates of the Brygidki Prison, that all who desired might come and see for themselves what had been done. Those who went reported that the Germans were employing Jews only to exhume the corpses, and that they had to do it with their bare hands, without spades or shovels, while their German guards beat their backs—wearing gas-masks themselves because of the frightful stench. Jews who fainted were drenched with water, and if they fainted repeatedly, were shot.
>
> I asked whether the Jews had really rendered services to the Bolsheviks.
>
> 'Yes,' one of my friends told me. 'Many worked for the N.K.W.D. But one cannot generalize. There were other Jews who did not forget that they were Poles.'

Moreover, there is ample evidence that the Poles, as a whole, did not view the German occupation as an opportunity to even scores with the Jews for their conduct under Soviet rule.

Although tiny groups of Poles did take matters into their own hands after the Soviet retreat in June 1941, this constituted a marginal phenomenon and generally occurred in localities where the local Polish leadership had been wiped out. It is noteworthy that there had been no violent incidents in these localities upon the German entry in September 1939. For example, according to Nahman Rapp, a resident of ***Grajewo***,

> During this time [i.e., September 1939] the non-Jewish population of Grayevo took no part in anti-Semitic actions. To the contrary, there were cases in which German soldiers set fire to Jewish

> homes, while the Polish neighbors helped quench the flame. In this way the newly-built house of the tailor Isaac Grobgeld was saved, as well as that of Yoske Gurovske ("Yoske the Spinner").

With few exceptions such as those in the Łomża district, the reprisals in June and July 1941 were directed against suspected collaborators regardless of their nationality, and did not target Jews indiscriminately. The local population generally could, and did, differentiate between those Jews who openly supported the Soviet regime and those who did not, and most Poles were not looking for revenge but a return to normalcy. In the town of ***Sokoły***, in the Łomża district,

> Before the German "*Amstkommissar*" arrived in Sokoly, a Polish lawyer [and prewar mayor of the town], Manikowski, organized a temporary town committee and militia. They requested that the Jews also participate in service in the militia, but they did not find any volunteers. In matters of economic administration, the Jews cooperated with Manikowski and contributed their share in organizing supplies, mainly in baking bread for the Jewish population, who constituted two-thirds of the town.

Moreover, the Polish population did not by and large succumb to German provocation, such as the publicity given to the large number of corpses found in Soviet jails where gruesome executions of prisoners had taken place on the eve of the Soviet retreat. The most violent reaction came not from the Poles, the party most aggrieved by the Jews and other local collaborators, but from the Ukrainians, who perpetrated many pogroms (the largest in Lwów and Tarnopol) which to some degree targeted perceived Soviet collaborators. Very often these excesses were orchestrated or at least instigated by the Germans and their collaborators, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists. The Germans subsequently put a stop to the violence and assumed the role of "protectors" of the Jewish population—a pattern that was repeated throughout occupied Europe.

A frequent pretext for the pogroms was the opening by the Germans of the local jails, in which thousands of Poles and Ukrainians as well as some Jews were massacred just before the Soviet retreat. The publicity given to the gruesone executions of prisoners incensed the local population, but few Poles took part in the attacks on Jews that ensued. In ***Głębokie***, in northeastern Poland, for example, according to Jewish sources, after the Germans revealed recent Soviet atrocities in the prison in nearby Berezwecz (where a few local Jews had also been held), "the provocation was not accepted by the local Christian population," which was comprised mostly of Poles. The local council spoke out against Jew-baiting and "called upon the population of all faiths and nationalities to unite and make peace among themselves." The few punitive actions that followed nonetheless were not random but targeted those who had been closely connected to the Soviet regime.

> At first the Gestapo, with the help of the local police and some other local Christians, began to search for communists and their cohorts who had worked for the Soviet occupation forces, or served them in some capacity. Almost immediately, 42 persons were arrested. … There were also a

> few Christians … All of those arrested, except for the few, above mentioned merchants, had been officials of the Communist regime during the Soviet occupation.

As noted earlier, Jews were also among the prisoners executed by the Soviets in June 1941, though not nearly in proportion to their share of the overall population. In ***Lwów***, for example, some 44 Jews were killed in the Łącki Street prison, or about eight percent of recorded executions were recorded, whereas in the Zamarstynowska Street prison 16 Jews were killed, or about 3.5 percent of the total. There is no record of Jews being executed in the prisons in Tarnopol and Czortków.

By and large, the average Pole had no involvement in the persecution or harassment of Jews in Eastern Poland, nor did they support Nazi German genocidal policies. When rumours of impending measures set off panic among the Jews of ***Słonim,*** large numbers of Jews went to stay with their Christian acquaintances every night. Herman Kruk, the chronicler of the ***Wilno*** ghetto, describes the reaction of the largely Polish population of that city to the ghettoization of the Jews in September 1941 and later events.

> Today [September 8th], at Ostra Brama [in the chapel located above this ancient gate was the holiest Catholic shrine in Wilno which housed the icon of the revered Madonna of Ostra Brama—*M.P.*], there was a prayer in honor of the martyrdom of the Jews. People say that Jews are now bringing in full bundles, which they got in the city as gifts from Christians in the street.
>
> In the street, at a Maistas [meat cooperative established by the Soviet authorities], masses of Christians brought packages of meat and distributed them to the Jewish workers marching to the ghetto.
>
> The sympathy of the Christian population, more precisely of the Polish population, is extraordinary.
>
> [September 15th] Christians come to the ghetto. People say that Christian friends and acquaintances often come. Today a priest came to me, looking for his Jewish friends.
>
> [May 6, 1942] From Vilna [Wilno] and the whole area, masses of young men are being taken for work in Germany. Yesterday one of those groups was led through Szawelska Street and a lot of Jews saw them. In the street, guarded by Lithuanians, they stormily sang the national battle song [actually, the Polish national anthem—*M.P.*], "Poland Is Not Yet Lost," and as they approached the Jewish ghetto, they shouted slogans:
>
> "Long live the Jews!…"
>
> A mood I only want to note here.

Historian Nathan Cohen noted that other contemporary diaries reinforced Herman Kruk's observations:

> It is possible to find in diaries … quotes such as "Christians came to help," "Good friends came to give a hand … ," "Christians were helpful, they bought things for us, sold our possessions outside the ghetto (and brought us the money)," "Christians are crying more than Jews," etc. It is

> significant that these sayings refer to "Christians." Who were these "Christians"? Herman Kruk answers this question by saying: "The sympathy shown by the Christian population, to be more precise, by the POLISH population, is excellent." Dr. [Lazar] Epstein expressed himself with almost the same words.

Finally, before assessing the acts of vengeance perpetrated on Jews in June and July 1941, one should consider how Jews reacted to collaborators or those perceived to have been such under the German occupation. Not only did many Jews enter the NKVD and form death squads to settle scores after the Soviet "liberation" of Poland, but already during the German occupation they took every opportunity to exact revenge. There are hundreds of examples of murders perpetrated on those believed to have harmed Jews; in some cases entire families and even villages (e.g., Naliboki and Koniuchy), including women, children and the elderly, were massacred. Moreover, these activities were carried out with virtual impunity. Once the Stalinist regime was installed, many Jews had recourse to the legal system and courts, such as they were, to see that those guilty of misdeeds against Jews were punished.

It is important to bear in mind that, as the war drew to a close and occupying powers retreated, people across Europe wanted to settle scores. In France, 8,000 to 9,000 real or alleged collaborators were lynched during the last months of the war or at the moment of liberation. As many fell victim to spontaneous and/or organized eruptions of popular violence in Italy. Tito's partisans killed tens of thousands of people in Yugoslavia, and the victims of the "savage purging" in Bulgaria numbered between 30,000 and 40,000. Courts and tribunals were also overburdened. In France, 350,000 people were investigated, 45,000 were convicted, and 1,500 were executed. In Holland, 120,000 to 150,000 people were arrested, and tens of thousands were fired from their jobs. The courts sentenced 50,000 people, 152 of them to death (40 of these were executed). In Belgium, dossiers were opened on 405,067 persons accused of collaboration, and 57,254 were prosecuted. Of these, 2,940 were sentenced to death (of whom 242 were executed); 2,340 were sentenced to life imprisonment.

Vengeance against perceived or potential collaborators also swept North America. Even though Japanese immigrants and their descendants posed no real threat and did not agitate on behalf of Japan during the Second World War, the Canadian and United States governments, with the support of the citizenry, uprooted the Japanese populations from the West Coast, confiscated their property and interned them in concentration camps for the duration of the war. The postwar process of rehabilitation, and obtaining a small measure of redress for their material losses and mistreatment in the most democratic and wealthiest nations on earth, was a tedious and protracted one.

The Twentieth Century was not one known for the tolerance of most of its societies, even Western ones. The American media, popular opinion and, indeed, national memory, recoil at the notion that for black Americans it was not only a time of state-sanctioned segregation and discrimination but also of frequent lynchings and pogroms. In 1917, one of the bloodiest race riots in American history took place in East St. Louis, Illionis. It was started by white workers who were protesting the hiring of African Americans. By the time the violence ended, 39 blacks had been murdered and nearly 6,000 others had been driven from

their homes. During the "The Red Summer of 1919" alone there were 26 race riots in which the white population turned on black Americans and destroyed their communities, murdering and injuring thousands of blacks. The authorities made little effort to stem this tide. As a report submitted to the Florida Board of Regents on December 22, 1993, reveals,

> Racial unrest and violence against African Americans permeated domestic developments in the United States during the post-World War I era. From individual lynchings to massive violence against entire black communities, whites in both the North and the South lashed out against black Americans with a rage that knew few bounds. From Chicago to Tulsa, to Omaha, East St. Louis, and many communities in between, and finally to Rosewood, white mobs pursued what can only be described as a reign of terror against African Americans during the period from 1917 to 1923. In Chicago, Illinois, for example, law and order was suspended for 13 days in July 1919 as white mobs made foray after foray into black neighborhoods, killings and wounding 365 black residents and leaving another 1,000 homeless. In June 1921, the black section of Tulsa, Oklahoma, was almost burned out and thousands were left homeless following racial violence by white residents.

Yet, as Columbia University historian István Deák recently pointed out in conjunction with the debate over the massacre at Jedwabne,

> until recent stories were published, I wonder how many Americans had ever heard of what happened in Tulsa, Oklahoma, at the end of May 1921, when the city's whites, incited by the press and by politicians, massacred several hundred innocent blacks. Although I am a professional historian, I heard of this atrocity only last year, forty-four years after I arrived in the US. The Tulsa massacre, moreover, took place when the United States was at peace, whereas Jedwabne occurred during a terrible war, under alternating cruel occupations, and in the midst of total administrative and political chaos.

Less than two years later, in January 1923, mobs of white Americans descended on a black community in Rosewood, Florida, massacring between 40 and 150 people. Houses were torched and looted, and the community was eradicated. Black churches were set on fire throughout the state. For many whites, the removal of their black neighbours—a "Florida without Blacks"—was a dream fulfilled. Tellingly, not one person was ever convicted for this heinous crime, because of "insufficient evidence." These events have been essentially erased from American national consciousness.

Violent manifestations of hatred have occurred, and continue to occur, throughout the entire world. In Palestine, Jewish "freedom fighters" annihilated the innocent Arab population of the peaceful village of Deir Yassin in April 1948 because their mere presence was considered to be an obstacle to the political aspirations of Jewish settlers intent on creating a Jewish state free of Arabs. Unprovoked flare-ups have repeatedly ignited that troubled land. According to a *Jerusalem Post* Foreign Service report filed on May 24, 1996,

> Jerusalem—Hundreds of Jewish worshippers went on a rampage in the Old City Friday morning, attacking Arab bystanders and damaging Arab property, following all-night prayers for the Shavuot holiday at the Western Wall.
>
> "The rioting was unprovoked, and we still haven't figured out what motivated it," Jerusalem Police spokesperson Shmuel Ben-Ruby said.
>
> The rioters broke windows and damaged merchandise at stores just inside Damascus Gate. They also turned over vendors' stalls and pushed and shoved Arab bystanders. Many merchants quickly closed the shutters on their stores to avoid damage. Ben-Ruby said no injuries were reported.
>
> The Jewish rioters also threw stones at Arab vehicles on Sultan Suleiman Street, outside Damascus Gate. About 25 complaints were filed with police for damage caused by rioting, representing only a small number of the actual instances, Ben-Ruby said.
>
> The unrest caught police by surprise, coming after a quiet all-night study-and-prayer service at the Western Wall, attended by thousands.
>
> The vandalism broke out about 8 a.m., as a crowd of worshippers leaving the Western Wall made its way through the Old City.
>
> Dozens of police were called to the scene and clashed with rioters. There were no arrests.
>
> Police sources said the rioting was apparently provoked by a group of right-wing Jewish extremists in the crowd of worshippers, who began attacking Arab targets.

Even in prosperous, highly-developed, long-standing democracies not much is needed, seemingly, for racial strife to flare up on a massive scale in the Twenty-first Century, as recent events in Australia, which has witnessed a rash of synagogue burnings in recent years, show. According to an Agence France-Presse report published in the *National Post* (Toronto) on December 12, 2005 ("Race riots erupt on Australian beach: Mobs of youths attack people of Mideast origin"):

> Twenty-five people were injured and 16 were arrested as race riots on a Sydney beach spread overnight to several suburbs, police said today.
>
> Islamic and political leaders condemned the violence, which was launched by mobs of youths who attacked people of Middle Eastern appearance on Cronulla beach in south Sydney yesterday.
>
> More than 5,000 people gathered at the beach after e-mail and mobile phone messages called on local residents to beat-up "Lebs and wogs"—racial slurs for people of Lebanese and Middle Eastern origin.
>
> The move followed assaults a week ago on two volunteer lifeguards at the beach, which is a popular gathering place for Muslims from inner-city suburbs, and allegations that local women were being harassed.
>
> Chanting "No more Lebs" and "Aussie, Aussie, Aussie … Oi, Oi, Oi," mobs of drunken young men waving Australian flags attacked anyone suspected of having a Middle Eastern background.
>
> One Muslim woman had her headscarf ripped off and another was chased into a beach kiosk, local media reported.
>
> Six police officers were injured as they tried to quell the violence, and two ambulance officers were also hurt.

> Later, a gang of some 60 men reportedly of Middle Eastern appearance launched a series of apparent revenge attacks in nearby suburbs, smashing more than 40 cars with baseball bats and stabbing two youths.
>
> New South Wales state Premier Morris Iemma described the violence at Cronulla beach as "stomach turning."
>
> "I saw yesterday people trying to hide behind the Australian flag; well they are cowards whose behaviour will not be tolerated," Mr. Iemma told Channel Nine television.
>
> Mr. Iemma said he planned to bring together community leaders for discussions about how to prevent further violence.
>
> Police Commissioner Ken Moroney said he was disgusted by the violence.

Had these events occurred in Eastern Europe the Western media would have labelled them a "pogrom."

Unfortunately, systemic forms of discrimination permeate the fabric of almost all nations including Western ones. In Louisiana, 1916 witnessed an assault on the native Cajun culture, when the use of French was banned in all schools and government agencies. Strict quotas for Jews were also introduced at leading American universities after World War I and did not disappear until the 1960s. The exploitation of Blacks and native Americans has continued to this day.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Summation

Many aspects of the behaviour of a small but dynamic pro-Soviet portion of the Jewish population of Poland's undoubtedly qualify as collaboration with the Soviet aggressors who, together with Nazi Germany, invaded and divided up Poland in September 1939. The examples provided in this compilation can be multiplied to include virtually every town in the Eastern Borderlands. Under the Soviet occupation, throughout this region, it was the Jews who lashed out at Poles and the Poles were on the defensive. In the words of American sociologist Tadeusz Piotrowski,

> Thousands of Polish survivors' testimonies, memoirs, and works of history tell of Jewish celebrations, of Jewish harassment of Poles, of Jewish collaboration (denunciations, manhunts, and roundups of Poles for deportation), of Jewish brutality and cold-blooded executions, of Jewish pro-Soviet citizens' committees and militias, and of the high rates of Jews in the Soviet organs of oppression after the Soviet invasion of 1939. The Poles perceived all of this as ingratitude and betrayal; the Jews saw it as retribution and revolution.

There is no comparable body of literature implicating Poles in anti-Jewish excesses of this nature in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland, despite the fact that a small number of Poles also collaborated with the Soviets, sometimes under duress. The fact that were some Polish collaborators is thus irrelevant in terms of assessing Jewish conduct towards Poles, in the same way as Jewish historiography does not give any consideration to the existence of Jewish collaborators (e.g., the Jewish order police and Gestapo agents operating both inside and outside the ghettos) when assessing Polish conduct under German occupation or, for that matter, to the fact that Polish blackmailers also targeted fellow Poles. Yet Poles are called on to account for these trangressions *collectively*, even though they were condemned by the Polish underground state and punished. On the other hand, there is no sense of responsibility on the part of the Jewish community for the misdeeds of its own members. As we have seen, with few exceptions, even the ardent new converts to Communism continued to maintain ties with the community and, in any event, almost all of them returned to the fold once they became disenamored with their experiment.

Nor did Poles in German-occupied Poland take matters into their own hands in 1939–1941 to target Jews in this manner, even though they could have done so with impunity. Poles did not participate in rounding up and mistreating Jewish prisoners of war, nor did they vandalize synagogues and Jewish monuments. Already as early as September 7, 1939, the first Pole, a postman from Limanowa by the name of Jan Semik, was shot dead by the Germans for trying to stop the execution of a group of Jewish hostages. In October 1940, a Polish woman named Aniela Kozioł was executed in Łańcut for sheltering a Jewish family. The

were hundreds of such cases during the occupationeven though a collective death penalty was imposed on the family of anyone who dared to defy German decrees not to help Jews.

Jews did not rush to the aid of their Polish neighbours during the Soviet occupation. There is no record of a Jew putting his or her life on the line for a Pole. Very little is known of Jewish efforts to shelter endangered Poles during this period. Nor was there any significant effort on the part of the Jewish community and its communal and religious leadership to contain, censure or even dissociate themselves from the frequent Jewish excesses directed blindly at elements of the Polish population at large even though such entreaties were not punishable by law. The impression one receives from hundreds of recorded accounts is that members of the non-Jewish minorities (Ukrainians and Belorussians) were more inclined to help or sympathize with the Poles, even though the Jews were often in a better position to do so. But perhaps this is not surprising. As we have seen, more than anyone else, the Jews feared collaborators and betrayers from within their own community.

This void is striking given the numerous memorial books dedicated to towns in this region that have been published. Yet, those same memorial books, and Holocaust literature in general, often condemn Poles globally for the activities of a small number of Poles and for the fact that not all Poles were prepared to sacrifice their lives for Jews under the German occupation. Moreover, the evidence shows overwhelmingly that, despite the infinitely greater risk involved, Jews were far more likely to receive assistance from Poles in the German zone, than Poles from Jews in the Soviet zone.

To be sure, and contrary to what some historians contend, there were fairly frequent cases of Jews—mostly the middle-aged and elderly, but seldom the radicalized youth—warning their grateful Polish neighbours of impending arrests and deportations, intervening on their behalf with Soviet officials, and providing other assistance, sometimes for payment. (Though, as Jewish wartime memoirs point out, friendly advice, the most common form of assistance, was not the same as a willingness to offer real help.) Relatively few of these cases have been recorded (they have been culled in the annotations), even though the risk that one faced for performing such acts of kindness was negligible. Only rarely was temporary shelter (a much more risky undertaking) provided to Poles who were being hunted down by the Soviet authorities. Can anyone seriously argue that Jews viewed Poles as being within the Jewish universe of obligation or that the Jews lived up to the role of their brothers' keepers vis-à-vis their Polish neighbours? (The theme that Poles excluded Jews from the brotherhood of victims under German occupation has become a hackneyed *leitmotiv* in Holocaust writing, but it is one that can be invoked equally in the context of Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland.)

The outcome of collaboration with the Soviets—as well as the infamous Gulag—was not an unknown factor. By 1939 many millions of innocent people had fallen victim—in deportations, executions, labour camps and mass starvation—to the most murderous regime of the twentieth century, and indeed in all history. Reports of these widespread Soviet atrocities had reached Poland well before the war. On the other hand, those Jews who had been harassed and imprisoned in Nazi Germany before the outbreak of the war were, for the most part, released and allowed to emigrate. Nazi Germany had not yet embarked on large-

scale genocide in the early months of the war, though there were some mass executions—mostly of Christian Poles—in places like Piaśnica and Palmiry.

In the Soviet zone, the active assistance of local collaborators (from among the non-Polish population) was crucial to the success of the identification, arrest and deportation to the Gulag of hundreds of thousands of victims. These deeds were carried out on the basis of prepared lists and targeted first and foremost large segments of the Polish population. The ghettoization and deportation of Jews to death camps in German-occupied Poland, on the other hand, were not dependent on similar forms of collaboration by Poles. These tasks were assigned for the most part to the German-appointed Jewish councils (*Judenräte*) and the Jewish ghetto police. The entire action was overseen by the Germans who employed numerous German forces and auxiliaries of various nationalities (Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian) brought in for this purpose. The involvement of the Polish "Blue" police was, in the assessment of leading Jewish historians such as Szymon Datner and Raul Hilberg, marginal.

In the cities, Jews by and large self-identified by obeying German orders to move into ghettos before the Holocaust got underway. In the countryside, as one Jew tells us, the task of identifying Jews was especially easy for the Germans and did not require much Polish assistance:

> Traveling through the Polish countryside in the summer of 1940, the uninformed observer could get the impression that life continued relatively peacefully in those small communities. Most men still wore their Eastern Jewish attire; old Jews, looking like patriarchs out of the Bible were standing dignified in front of their houses, the Star of David on their arms. This picture already belonged to the past in the big cities. It was also pleasing to notice that most Polish peasants treated the Jews in a rather friendly way. They seemed more tolerant than gentiles in the larger centers. Denunciations were exceptional.

Moreover, unlike the situation in the Soviet zone, in German-occupied Poland not only were rewards offered for turning in Jews, but also, and more importantly, those who failed to do so exposed themselves, their families, and even their community to the death penalty. There were no such incentives in Soviet-occupied Poland, nor did one risk one's freedom or life by not turning in one's neighbour. There, collaboration was *entirely gratuitous*.

One might thus be tempted to paraphrase, in the context of the Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland, the oft-repeated charge levelled against Poles by Holocaust historians such as Lucy Dawidowicz and Mordechai Paldiel: Hunting down Poles (officers, soldiers and officials) became a favourite pastime of the Jews—a similar phenomenon of gratuitous collaboration (with the Soviets) was without parallel in occupied Europe. At the same time it should be recognized that these types of statements, which abound in Holocaust literature, add little if anything to our understanding of those complex historical events.

As a rule, unlike Polish writings about the war, which generally acknowledge the actions of criminal elements among the Poles who denounced or blackmailed Jews (indeed, the Polish underground authorities punished such actions with death), collaboration with the Soviets of some elements of the Jewish

population is mentioned only rarely or is simply glossed over in Holocaust literature. Often there are outright denials that it ever took place or that it targeted Poles. What is more, with few notable exceptions, there is no sense of shame or remorse for these actions even today. Even those writings that do acknowledge some aspects of Jewish collaboration with the Soviets tend to explain it away by resorting to unwarranted generalizations and oversimplifications:

> As far as the Poles were concerned, they saw that we were enthusiastic about the arrival of their enemy! They resented it. … They did not understand that we were happy *only* because we did not want the Germans. … The Jews were not ecstatic about the Russians. Nor were they pleased that Poland ceased to exist. If given a choice, most of us would have preferred Poland to Russia, but we were afraid of the Germans.

Few, if any, knowledgeable observers would subscribe to this view. As we have seen in countless cases, pro-Soviet sympathies were widespread and invariably manifested themselves by a profusion of red armbands and frequent outbursts of anti-Polish agitation, yet there is no record of anti-German sentiments being expressed openly at that time. Jews living under Soviet rule, especially the bulk of native Jews who were not at risk of being deported to the Gulag, were far more likely to express what one Jewish couple wrote to their son in Chicago in September 1940: "We are satisfied with the Soviet regime, which liberated us from Polish enslavement." Nothing much had changed from the sentiments first expressed in September 1939, when neither clear knowledge of the German atrocities nor the uncertain conditions of life under Soviet rule dampened the joy felt by the Jewish masses in ***Kobryń***, Polesia:

> 20th of September [1939], in the morning—a Russian tank entered Kobrin from the direction of Bernavitz [Baranowicze]. The tank was followed by more tanks and soldiers. People were ecstatic. *The fascistic Polish kingdom has crumbled.* We sat at night and read the pamphlets the Russians passed around. We were full of hope for a better future. The war had lasted two [sic] weeks. Now that the Russians were here we were not worried about our future.

Additional counter-arguments to the claim that the Jews greeted the Soviets *only* because they feared the Germans have been advanced by knowledgeable observers, and are compelling. Few Jews in Eastern Poland were aware of how the Germans were treating their co-religionists in Western and Central Poland when they welcomed the Soviet invaders en masse in mid-September 1939. Indeed, as we shall see, many Holocaust survivors from Eastern Poland professed that same lack of knowledge even as late as the summer of 1941, when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union. Furthermore, very many Jews who had fled to Eastern Poland in advance of the German army were prepared to risk returning to the German-occupied zone once the September 1939 campaign came to a close, first as black markeeters and illegal returnees, and later in response to formal repatriation programs.

In any event, the standard Jewish stance in no way negates, justifies, or even addresses the fact—borne out by countless eyewitness accounts—of widespread anti-Polish agitation, extensive denunciations and

other forms of collaboration with the Soviet authorities, militia and security forces directed against the Polish population. Clearly, no one *had to* betray their Polish neighbours in the Soviet zone to protect him or her skin from the new overlords. This spectacle of collective revenge directed at downtrodden individuals just because they were Poles did not only expose an ugly nationalistic streak, but also was clearly disproportionate to any alleged wrongs experienced by the Jews in interwar Poland. By no stretch of imagination could their treatment be equated to the fate of the Poles who were handed over to the Soviet Gulag.

Teresa Prekerowa, a Polish historian who was decorated by Yad Vashem for her rescue activities on behalf of Jews, has made many of these very points in her important study, "The Jewish Underground and the Polish Underground." First of all, she notes that "Polish-Jewish relations tend to be treated in a one-sided way, from the standpoint of Poles and their attitude towards the Jews, so that the converse relationship—the attitude of the Jews towards the Poles—has been neglected." Prekerowa also takes issue with the view, subscribed to by many Holocaust historians, that the sole reason for the favourable reception by many Jews of the invading Soviet forces was their fear of Nazi Germany.

> Can the behaviour of the Jews at the beginning of the Soviet occupation really be fully explained by their fear of the Germans? [Shmuel] Krakowski cites a number of German anti-Jewish decrees which testify to the terror from which the Red Army liberated the Jewish population and which makes their joy and gratitude readily comprehensible. However, on 17 September 1939 the Jews could not have predicted that the Germans were going to announce these decrees. Compulsory marks of identification were introduced in September, but only in Kraków: the general decree concerning them was announced by Governor [Hans] Frank only on 23 November. The banning of Jews from travel by train was introduced from January 1940 onwards. The confiscation of Jewish (and indeed Polish) property in September applied only to refugees from the territories which were incorporated into the Reich; this was implemented more widely in the course of the following months in the General Gouvernement region. In the middle of September [1939] no one could foresee the tragic fate that awaited the Jews. People knew about the *Reichskristallnacht* of November 1938 and about the restriction of Jewish rights in Germany, but these events aroused anxiety rather than panic. That is why many Jews who had escaped eastwards from western Poland before the German advance became disillusioned with the Soviet regime and tried before long to return to the territories of the General Gouvernement.

Indeed, vast numbers of Jews who could not adjust or simply became homesick were ready to leave the Soviet zone and return to their homes in the German zone which they had fled in panic a few months earlier. Tens of thousands of Jews besieged the German repatriation commission offices in Lwów, Białystok, Brześć, Przemyśl, Włodzimierz Wołyński and elsewhere, which were established in accordance with the terms of the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty. The scenes of Jews lining up in throngs in front of German offices staffed by delegations from the Gestapo, often for days at a time, chanting their support for Hitler and begging German officials to be accepted back, border on the surreal.

Unbeknownst to these ardent petitioners, NKVD functionaries who assisted the German commission also scrupulously recorded the names of those who sought to return to the German zone for their own purposes. Jewish testimonies confirming this are plentiful.

In ***Horochów***, Volhynia,

> Several months had passed since the arrival of the Red Army and the Jewish refugees were still in the town. In the course of time they managed to re-establish contact with their families in the German-occupied zone and some of them expressed a desire to return to their homes. With this in mind they applied to the local authorities and notices soon appeared in public places calling on those who wished to return to Poland to register at the police station. Many refugees took advantage of this offer and one night, several weeks later, all the men who had registered were shipped off to forced labour camps.

The following scene took place in ***Lwów***:

> The Germans photographed Jews swarming in front of the premises of the repatriation commission and published the photographs in their illustrated publications as proof that the stories about the atrocities of the Nazi regime in the Generalgouvernement were nothing but British *Greuelpropaganda.* Occasionally, among those seeking to return were communists, tailors from Zgierz and Pabianice, leftist writers, and even former Soviet enthusiasts.

Nikita Khrushchev, then Secretary-General of the Communist Party in the Ukraine, recorded that when he went to inspect the lengthy queues from up close,

> I was astounded to see that most of the people in the queue were Jews. They tried to bribe the Gestapo men for permission to return to their homes.

A Jew who lined up for permission to repatriate to the German zone recalled:

> During the registration, after standing in line for several hours, I finally received a card for my departure, which was regarded at that time as a stroke of luck. A German officer turned to the crowd and asked: "Jews, where on earth are you going? We are going to kill you." … When German commissions arrived in Lwów, Włodzimierz and Brześć to allow for a return to the other side of the Bug River [i.e., the German zone], masses of Jews by the hundreds and thousands came out to cheer Germany and Hitler. Try to imagine crowds of Jews yelling "Heil Hitler."

Israeli historian Ben-Cion Pinchuk records a similar authentic story:

> At Biala [Biała] Podlaska, the first station on the German side of the border, the train carrying refugees east encountered the train moving west. 'When Jews coming from Brisk [Brześć] saw

> Jews going there, they shouted: "You are insane, where are you going?" Those coming from Warsaw answered with equal astonishment: "You are insane, where are you going?"'

At that time Germany and the Soviet Union were firm allies and the Soviets also openly operated "repatriation commissions" in German-occupied Poland. Therefore, registering for repatriation was in no sense intended to be a political act: it was entirely legal and invited. Those Jews who registered had no idea that they were publicly voicing their dissatisfaction with the Soviet regime, nor did they intend to convey that message to the Soviet authorities. By opting to repatriate to the German zone, and choosing not to accept Soviet citizenship, they could not have foreseen that they would later run afoul of the Soviet authorities. They simply wanted to return to their families and homes in the German zone; they did not view the German regime as a lethal threat to their existence.

In making those same points, historian Dov Levin underscores that, initially, the impugned consequences of not opting for Soviet citizenship were not at all apparent. Once it became so, the Jewish refugees fell in line and complied fully with what was expected of them by the Soviet authorities, as they had never intended to openly defy those authorities.

> At this time (in early 1940), only some refugees (by no means a majority) chose to effect their naturalization rights. Most of the refugees, especially those with families on the German side, preferred not to decide, thereby leaving themselves the option of obtaining temporary haven. In part, this was owing to their reservations about accepting the new internal passport with its restrictive clauses. However, there was another crucial factor: by accepting the Soviet passport, they would forfeit not only their previous Polish citizenship but the possibility of ever returning and being reunited with the loved ones whom they had left behind. Some refugees, eschewed Soviet citizenship lest they not be allowed to leave the USSR when it became practical. For the moment, those who turned down Soviet citizenship were not penalized; for example, they could live wherever they wished. …
>
> After this stage … All refugees who had not yet exchanged their Polish ID cards for Soviet internal passports were ordered to report to one of the militia stations and declare, voluntarily and under their personal signature, either their acceptance of Soviet citizenship or their desire to return home (to the German-occupied zone). No third option was offered. Not surprisingly, the refugees complied …

On the other hand, contrary to all evidence, Jan T. Gross argues that "this was undeniably a collective manifestation of defiance and an open, public rejection of the Soviet regime. And it was treated as such." Not only was there no conscious choice to defy the Soviet authorities, nor any spirit of defiance on the part of the Jews, but also, as noted earlier, of the 200,000–300,000 Jewish refugees from the German zone, no more than 43,000 were deported to the Soviet interior. Thus, in any event, the Soviets clearly did not project their suspicions or dissatisfaction onto the entire unwitting group of Jewish refugees. Indeed, many of the refugees continued to advance their careers unobstructed, as was the case in ***Ołyka*** near Łuck:

…we all attached red ribbons to our lapels; all the Jews in town were looking forward to greeting the liberating Soviet forces … Since I was still under the influence of the Polish army [in which the author served since 1937], I wasn't particularly enthusiastic about the excitement.

As soon as the advance forces of the Soviet army arrived on bicycles, followed by tanks, they were greeted warmly with bouquets of flowers. … The [Jewish] youth in town, armed with pens and guns, assumed various positions—administrative, police, governmental—in various offices and cooperatives. I chose to register in an evening high school program, and because I spoke Russian well, I was chosen as an activist in many institutions (there was no shortage of them). I served as the chairman and secretary of *Osoviarmia*, [probably acronym for "Soviet Army Society"] *Mofar*, [probably acronym for "International Organization of Workers Federations"] and the Red Cross, as well as the chairman of the cooperative evaluation committee, and Plotnick was chosen as the chairman of the Worker's Cooperative. What a "pleasure" that was …

Soon enough they started arresting people, including Eliezer Katzavman, Shalom Tsam and others. Jewish refugees arrived from Poland … from Warsaw, Lodz [Łódź] and other large cities. For some reason they approached me and asked me to help them find work in our institution. I saw them as refugees and as outstanding professional who could teach us a lot. Plotnick reacted coldly and angrily, claiming there were no openings for extra workers, and that these people would take away our jobs in no time. His views were disclosed to the Secretary of the Party, Maksimenko, who was the official representative. He informed us that someone speaking that way deserved at least ten years in prison, but that this time he forgave us, so long as we watched our words and actions. We immediately hired four refugees who were industrious and appropriate workers.

Indeed, the refugees didn't sit around with their arms folded. They soon proceeded to investigate each one of us, taking advantage of their skills and craftiness as refugees from big cities such as Warsaw and Lodz, etc. They curried favor with the activists and Party members, and developed relationships with [and] engaged in intrigue. They slowly started gaining control in Olyka. They took the best positions after Aharon Plotnick was sentenced to a year in prison, and his son Chaikel lost 25 percent of his salary for once arriving at work 16 minutes late. …

At about the same time, Party member, Maksimenko appeared at our house, and wanted to recommend me as chairman of the Workers' Cooperative in place of Plotnick. He promised to help me advance, and to send me to training programs in Moscow. He said eventually I could get very high up. …

We weren't elected, and the only people elected to the Workers' Cooperative were the refugees who recently arrived and took over the Workers' Cooperative. Afterwards, they took over the whole town. They persecuted many local residents. I remember many occasions such as this. I'll only describe a typical case: one of them, Finkelstein, who was the manager of the restaurant in Vetalsky's building, caught a Jewish women fattening some geese she was going to sell, and told her to sell them to him for 3 and a half rubles per kilo, which was the official price (the market price was 60 rubles). He threatened to report her to the police, and of course the Jewish woman had no choice but to give him the geese. This is just one of many stories.

Numerous memoirs of Jews who lived under the Soviet occupation attest to the fact that they knew little or nothing about the condition of their fellow Jews in German-occupied Poland at the time. What is more, the stories that did circulate were generally disbelieved; they did not sit well with the awe and admiration with which East European Jews traditionally regarded the Germans and the favourable recollections of the behaviour of the German army during the First World War. As a result, relatively few Jews attempted to leave with the routed Soviet army in June 1941. Those who fled were, for the most part, implicated in the Soviet regime.

In ***Przemyśl,*** a border town that switched hands before being divided up between Germany and the Soviet Union,

> According to our information, the Germans were "reasonable" during the first two days. The optimists among the Jews saw them at first as cultured people, and therefore believed they need not be feared. …
>
> Two days before the Russians entered the eastern part of the town [on September 18, 1939], there was a sudden announcement that the Jews must leave [German-controlled] Zasanie within 24 hours. Any Jew found there after that time would be killed. … The Jews, who despite the bitter experience of the past few days, had not learned from the Germans' behavior toward them, did not believe that the military governor would actually issue the aforementioned order, and they decided to send a delegation to the governor …

Jews from ***Zabłudów*** near Białystok aver that

> The new [Soviet] regime was a puzzle to us, but we felt that we were saved from the Germans, without knowing exactly from what we were saved (that we knew only in the second edition of that world war). … Jewish refugees started coming into the town from the area conquered by the Germans with horrible stories … It was hard to believe that things like these actually happened, it left us with anxiety, but we thought that maybe those descriptions were exaggerated a bit.

A Jew from ***Nowogródek*** recalls:

> In 1940–41, Jewish refugees who had escaped from territories held by the Germans … arrived in Novogrodek. They told tales of German atrocities: arrests, concentration camps, executions and massacres. We heard these accounts, but refused to believe them. The horror stories simply didn't make sense. We went on with our lives, deluding ourselves that it was impossible for such murderous atrocities actually to be approved and perpetrated by the authorities. The Germans were considered a civilised nation. Many people remembered the German army of the First World War, which wasn't too terrible.

A Jew from ***Zabłotów*** near Kołomyja writes:

> At that time no one knew what the Germans were really doing to the Jews. Poles who came to Zoblotow [sic] from Warsaw or Cracow to sell their wares told us that German soldiers were beating up Jews, that German storm troopers with skull-and-crossbones emblems on their caps had been taking Jews away, presumably to forced-labor camps, and that these Jews had not been heard from since. But we refused to believe that such outrages could continue for very long.

A Jewish woman from ***Kowel***, in Volhynia, says that, after June 1940,

> My sisters and brother-in-law … like many refugees, they decided to register to go back to German-occupied Poland. Unfortunately, the Kovel Jews did not show any sympathy or hospitality for the refugees—they were unable to understand or to believe what the Nazi murderers were capable of doing.

A memoir from ***Tłuste,*** in Tarnopol province, states:

> People said various things about the Germans, but we did not believe the stories about the atrocities, so no one tried to escape to Russia when the war with Germany broke out.

In ***Horochów***, Volhynia,

> Only two young men who worked for the N.K.V.D. withdrew with the retreating Red Army, the rest of the population decided to stay on, in spite of the fact that trucks were put at the disposal of anybody who wanted to leave.

In ***Stepań,*** Volhynia:

> A few of the youth who were active in the "Komsomol" left the town and retreated with the Russians to Russia. Most of them remained alive. The clerks of the Russian authority tried to convince the Jews to flee to Russia. But it didn't work and the Jews didn't want to do this. It was difficult to break away from a home, to wander, and to be a refugee.
>
> Amongst the Jews of Stepan, there were a number of refugees who came before from a German controlled area of Poland. Most of them were of the opinion that life was not easy under the German regime, but annihilation was not to be expected. Therefore, they told us not to go with the Russians into Russia. This was the excepted [sic] opinion.

In ***Lwów:***

> The previous day she [i.e., the author's mother] had turned down the generous offer of a Soviet air force lieutenant to take us on a truck that had come to evacuate him. … As Russian soldiers were loading his belongings, the lieutenant repeated his offer:
>
> 'This is your last chance, comrade. The Germans will be here in a few hours.'

'They're not cannibals.'

'They may not be cannibals, but they're certainly murderers. Haven't you heard that they're killing Jews?'

'I've stopped believing in all that propaganda.'

'It's not propaganda. It's fact.'

My mother was unmoved …

Lusia's office also started to pack. They proposed that she should leave. She declined explaining that she had a large family whom she couldn't leave behind. After a brief consultation they announced that they were prepared to put at her disposal a truck so that she could take her entire family and their baggage. …

Our entire family sat up all night discussing the proposition. No one wanted to embark on an escapade into the interior of the Soviet Union. Only Lusia thought that we should take advantage of the opportunity and escape. I didn't quite know what decision to take. All I knew is that we definitely couldn't leave without our parents. They wouldn't manage without us. And that tipped the balance.

The news from Kraków, which had been under German occupation for two years, also influenced our decision. During that time nothing especially threatening had happened. Jews were moved from various neighbourhoods of the city to the ghetto, and they suffered large material losses. … but people somehow managed, they were employed and weren't starving. … During this same time we lived through the nightmare of nocturnal visits of the NKVD and the deportations. … Many people had the opportunity to go eastbound with the Russians. We don't know anyone from our [professional] milieu, however, who escaped with them.

In ***Czortków*** near the prewar Soviet border,

Although the Soviet authorities had made it possible for anyone to leave the town, and join the retreating Red Army, only a few hundred Jews, mostly young men, seized the opportunity and escaped to Soviet Russia.

The Soviets had systematically blocked all information about German atrocities against Jews from reaching the population. Even Jewish newspapers fell in line by not publishing anything critical about Germany, the Soviet Union's ally at the time. The Jewish writer, poet and playwright, Moshe Bronderzon from Łódź, who took refuge in Soviet-occupied ***Białystok***, complained bitterly (after the fact):

A Jewish newspaper [*Bialystoker Stern*] in a Jewish city, several kilometers from the German murder inferno, refuses to devote one line or even one word to the gruesome experiences of Jews on the other side of the border, in Poland where Jewish blood is being spilled with abandon.

Needless to add, the equally cruel fate of their non-Jewish countrymen under German rule also went unreported.

Turning a blind eye to German atrocities continued to paralyze Jewish communities long after the Soviet retreat. In ***Dzisna***, near the prewar Latvian border:

> On June 1, 1942, two young boys escaping from the German atrocities in Poland arrived at Dzisna and informed the Judenrat that the Germans were systematically killing all the Jews in every community. They begged everyone to run and hide before it was too late. The Judenrat threatened to turn them over to the Germans if they continued to tell their 'lies.' The boys pleaded with the council, trying to convince them that they were telling the truth, but the Judenrat refused to believe the stories. Fearing for their own lives, the two boys left Dzisna.

Prekerowa continues her analysis of Jewish attitudes as follows:

> It appears, then, that it was not fear of the Germans which was the chief reason for the joyous welcome extended to the invading Red Army. The more plausible view, which is now widely accepted, is that an important factor was the level of anti-Polish feelings, the result of the bad relations which had existed during the preceding period, especially the 1930s, which witnessed the negative Jewish policies of the leaders of the Second Republic, antisemitic declarations by the various political parties, and the excesses of the nationalistic thugs. Grudges and resentments produced a situation where among certain sections of the Jewish community the absence of any sense of solidarity with the Polish nation and identification with the Polish state was being demonstratively expressed.

Another group who welcomed the Soviets were those who owed taxes to the Polish government.

The extent of hostility toward the Polish State should not be underestimated. It cut across a broad spectrum of Jewish society that could hardly be accused of harbouring pro-Communist sympathies. Chaim Kaplan, a rabbi, educator and author from Warsaw, wrote the following entry in his diary on September 1, 1939:

> This war will indeed bring destruction upon human civilization. But this is a civilization which merits annihilation and destruction. …
>
> … well, now the Poles themselves will receive our revenge through the hands of our cruel enemy. …
>
> My brain is full of the chatterings of the radio from both sides. The German broadcast in the Polish language prates propaganda. Each side accuses the other of every abominable act in the world. Each side considers itself to be righteous and the other murderous, destructive, and bent on plunder. This time, as an exception to the general rule, both speak the truth. Verily it is so—both sides are murderers, destroyers, and plunderers, ready to commit any abomination in the world. If you want to know the character of any nation, ask the Jews. They know the character of every nation.

Mocking the Polish war effort, which as Norman Davies has pointed out inflicted more damage on the Germans and was more creditable than that of the Western European countries that collapsed the following year, was a common theme among Jews, as was their praise for the Soviet Union, the country that had collaborated with Nazi Germany to dismember Poland. Again it is important to note that these observations were made not by the uneducated, but by representative members of the mainstream of Jewish society. Although Warsaw did not surrender until September 27 and the Polish army continued to fight bravely still in the early days of October 1939, without Poland's allies lifting a finger in her defence, Chaim Kaplan, both haughty and defeatist, wrote:

> You get the impression ... that the Polish army is not an equipped army led by officers trained for warfare, but a flock of sheep. Whoever saw or heard of such a thing in the history of the wars of nations—that a rich country with thirty-five million citizens, with an organized army would become something to be to be stepped on by the German villain within five days? …
>
> Never before in history has any people suffered a defeat as shameful as this. And even if a hundred thousand unarmed civilians should give their lives for the capital—would they say it? Only a murderous government could make such a criminal decision. …
>
> One ally-Poland—let down all the other allies. Who ever dreamed of this kind of military catastrophe … At their first contact with the Germans they melted like wax and proved that their valor was an empty disguise.

Such sentiments can be found in many Jewish memoirs, even those written in recent years, with the hindsight of later events and reliable historical sources readily at hand. The following was penned by a professionally trained "educator" from Wilno.

> The Nazis met no resistance, and they progressed rapidly. …
>
> Unlike Poland that was caught unprepared for the German attack and offered no resistance, the Soviets fought hard against the Nazi invasion.

In reality, a similar situation prevailed in the Eastern Borderlands (as well as in the German partition) before their restoration to Poland in 1921, and had little to do with Polish attitudes. The Jews in the Eastern Borderlands had little affinity for Poland or her culture and language (many of them were Litvaks, Russian-speaking Jews, who had fled Russian persecution), and little use for the reborn Polish State. Polish attitudes in the interwar period, therefore, had only a limited impact on Jewish behaviour in 1939. The fact that interwar policies were not a determinative factor is further underscored by the fairly frequent cases, recorded earlier, of Jews coming to the assistance of Poles at risk of repression at the hands of the Soviets: one did not need an excuse to behave decently.

The key to assessing Jewish conduct in Soviet-occupied Poland lies elsewhere. Many Jews living in Poland at the time regarded themselves as a separate, Yiddish-speaking nation with their own religion and their own national and political aspirations, and had little sense of solidarity with the predominantly

Catholic Poles and their history, culture and traditions. Moreover, many Jews, though not formally Communists, were under the spell of Communist ideology and propaganda, or simply believed that the Soviet Union had more to offer them than Poland. As for the confrontation with the Soviet Union, the Jewish masses simply believed it was Poland's war—not theirs, and had no qualms in aligning themselves with the Soviet conquerors.

Prekerowa goes on to describe some of the tangible consequences of that state of affairs.

> It must also be emphasized that in many diaries, particularly those of young people, there are frequent expressions of spontaneous joy. This mood has no rational basis. 'Today is the happiest day of my life! We showered the approaching tanks with flowers,' wrote one young girl from Stanisławów in her diary.
>
> These factors induced the Jews, who knew the local scene well and were often in open conflict with non-Jewish segments of the population, to co-operate with the new administration and its apparatus of repression. The Soviets were not disappointed. Many Jews searched out and helped to arrest Polish officers, top prewar officials, and representatives of the intellectual élite, which was hostile to the USSR. …
>
> The fact that at the same time Jewish cultural, religious, and social institutions—just like Polish ones—were being liquidated, and that Jews were also part of the mass deportations of the population of eastern Poland, did not really alter this situation.

American sociologist Tadeusz Piotrowski adds another important dimension to this debate:

> But whether or not they [i.e., the Jews] knew, and whether or not they welcomed the Soviets simply to protect themselves from the Germans, are beside the point. Nothing justified the excesses of these Polish citizens, these communist Jews [many were simply pro-Soviet—*M.P.*], against the Polish population. What is worse, one can only speculate as to the reason for the total absence of any condemnation by the Jewish community and leaders, either then or now. (One possible answer is that to condemn is to admit.) To manifest pro-Soviet sympathy was one thing; to betray, deport, abuse, and murder neighbors, schoolmates, clients, and the soldiers of Poland under the guise of "self-protection from the Germans" was quite another. This was not a case of "do or die." There were no penalties for not volunteering.

After discounting the extent and impact of Jewish misconduct during the Soviet occupation on Polish-Jewish relations, Jewish historians have attempted to explain the Poles' reaction by pointing to interwar anti-Semitism—political, economic, social and religious—and, in psychological terms, to the trauma of the Soviet invasion. Shimon Redlich, head of the Raab Centre for Holocaust Studies at Ben-Gurion University, writes:

> An argument often cited in the literature and in public debate is that Polish hostility toward the Jews was aroused by Jewish support of Soviet occupation. In the Polish collective memory, Soviet

> occupation of the eastern frontier of Poland in 1939 and German occupation in 1941 were conjoined. Many Poles saw the German occupation as a kind of liberation from the Soviets. [In his book, *Neighbors,* Jan T.] Gross finds no concrete evidence of Jewish "collaborators" working for the Soviet authorities in the district in question.
>
> Indeed, such allegations were based more on conventions and stereotypes than actual fact. For the Poles, Soviet occupation was a trauma and a tragedy. They desperately needed an emotional outlet for their frustration. Venting their anger directly at the Soviets was not sufficient.

British historian Norman Davies has pointed out, however, the Polish allegations were not imagined but true (indeed, as we have seen, many Jewish eyewitnesses voiced the same "perceptions" as Poles at the time), and cannot be not explained away solely by confining one's examination to Polish attitudes and ignoring the Jewish component and the general flow or dynamics of history. As Davies wrote with great insight in the *New York Review of Books* (April 9, 1987):

> Generally speaking, there is a gross imbalance between the amount of research devoted to the Nazi occupation of Eastern Europe as opposed to the Soviet occupations; and the field awaits fuller investigation. Polish-Jewish relations deteriorated sharply on each of the three occasions when the Soviet Red Army has invaded Poland—in 1919–1920, in 1939, and in 1944–1945; and it would throw much light on the phenomenon if we could obtain a firm estimate of the dimensions of both Polish and Jewish collaboration.

Less than twenty years earlier, when the Bolsheviks invaded Poland and came dangerously close to destroying her newly won statehood, scenes similar to those witnessed in 1939 had occurred throughout the Eastern Borderlands and large portions of central Poland. When Poland was on the brink of invasion, Jews avoided military service and deserted from the Polish army en masse. (It was in this context that the short-lived internment camp for some 5,000 Jewish soldiers was set up in Jabłonna.) The larger portion of the Jewish community, including the Bundists and many members of the educated classes, and especially the youth, greeted the invading Bolshevik hordes in 1920 with great jubilation and fanfare and took part in massive anti-Polish rallies in plain view of their Polish neighbours. The notable exceptions were the Orthodox and Zionist elements, which remained loyal to and made great sacrifices for the Polish state that had taken them in centuries earlier when they fled pogroms and expulsions throughout Europe. (Strangely, in 1939–1941, the Bundists had learn their lesson, whereas the Zionists started to flirt with the Soviet authorities.)

Jews pointed out the direction of the Polish army and led the Bolsheviks to Polish establishments, which were pilfered, thus striking a blow at their would-be economic competitors. As Polish historian Janusz Szczepański has chronicled in his authoritative studies on this topic, revolutionary committees and militias composed almost exclusively of Jews sprang up in hundreds of localities. They set about destroying Polish state and religious emblems, denounced Polish policemen, officers and their families, and compiled lists of Polish patriots for the Soviet security police. In ***Wasilków*** near Białystok, Jewish Communists were

responsible for the deportation of members of the Polish intelligentsia and abused Polish prisoners of war. In ***Różana,*** sixteen Poles who had been identified by the Jewish revolutionary committee as "enemies of the people" were arrested and executed (one of the Poles managed to escape). Many young Jews volunteered for the Bolshevik army in their war against Poland.

Jewish opposition to Polish statehood sometimes took on violent forms in the Eastern Borderlands. Members of the Danish diplomatic staff reported witnessing, on April 19, 1919, Jews shooting at Polish soldiers at the train station during the battle over the predominantly Polish city of ***Wilno***. After taking that town in May 1919, following its brief capture by the Bolsheviks during which time it was under the domination of Jewish, pro-Bolshevik elements, Józef Piłsudski (the interwar dictator of Poland who enjoyed considerable popularity among Jews) recorded in his diary that the Jewish civilian population had fired shots and thrown hand grenades at Polish soldiers from windows and housetops, but he would not permit the Poles to strike back at the Jews. Unfortunately, such occurrences were frequent during the Polish-Soviet War of 1919–1920 (for example, in Lwów, Lida, Pińsk), and occasionally led to unwarranted and tragic retaliations. At the same time, it is important to remember that the extent of violence directed at Jews paled in comparison to the widescale massacres they endured at the hands of Ukrainian, Russian, and Belorussian factions, both nationalist and Communist (including the Red Army), who are believed to have murdered at least 100,000 Jews.

Jews were active players in these events, as much as anyone else, and not just passive, "neutral" bystanders. Under the spell of the Bolshevik Revolution, the left wing of the Bund transformed itself into the Combund, and afterwards it members joined the Communist Party. They led demonstrations against the Polish government in Zamość and the revolutionaries seized control of the city. As one observer notes,

> The truth be said, there was a portion of the Jewish populace who was sympathetic to the advance of the Red military. …
>
> As the Bolshevist army drew near to Zamość in the year 1920, the so-called 'Red Revolution' took place by us. A great number of the Jewish elements who were radical sympathizers were drawn into it. …
>
> The activity of the *Bund* in the professional organization diminishes. The communists obtain influence in a whole array of professional trade unions. In the course of a few years up to 1923, the influence of the *Bund* is most unions is entirely eliminated. The leadership, in particular, is in the hands of younger people, radicalized, after the victory of the Bolshevist Revolution in Russia.

It was because of their behaviour, and not on account of the Poles' alleged innate anti-Semitism, that Jews were struck with fear at the prospect of the return of the Polish army, and many of them fled with the Bolsheviks. However, the acts of retaliation which invariably follow in such cases everywhere were largely contained by the Polish authorities, though many excesses occurred targeting collaborators for the most part. But it was the Polish retaliations that captured the attention of the media worldwide, not the

widespread Jewish collaboration. The following descriptions, which are rather sparse about the actual activities of the revolutionary committees and the militia, are from Jewish sources.

> The Red Army captured Goniondz [***Goniądz*** near Łomża] during the Russian-Polish War of 1920. During the second day of occupation, the Russians formed a revolutionary committee with the abbreviated title of "Revkam" ["Revkom"]. Only laborers were members of "Revkam", primarily Bundists. Josef, the son of Teme-Raizel, was the committee chairman. Hanoch, the son of Itsche the water carrier was the education commissar. Moishe-Feivel, the son of Chaya Vitzes, was put in charge of sanitation. He was given the title of "Minister". Several Christians and Zeidke Rubin constituted the militia. Hanoch used to give talks in conjunction with the Bolshevik commissar.
>
> The "Revkam" had the authority to issue severe sentences and even the death penalty. None of them, however, could read or write Russian. They appointed Eli Dlugolensky as secretary. He exploited the ignorance of "Revkam" and issued documents as he wished. The commissar would sign each and every one. …
>
> The "Revkam" established a cooperative which would give notes to the [Jewish] grain merchants with which to purchase grain. Instead of one hundred thousand pounds of corn, the secretary would give a note for three hundred thousand pounds. The remaining two hundred thousand pounds he would sell in Bialystok [Białystok] for three times the price permitted by the cooperative. …
>
> Yoshua, the tinsmith, who lived in the valley next door to Chayim Kobrinsky (Chayim Polak's), took the Bolshevik speeches seriously. … Yoshua went to the "Revkam" and asked their assistance in facilitating this revolutionary justice. … Yoshua, the tinsmith, was enormously disappointed when the Bolsheviks were defeated. …
>
> When the Red Army withdrew, all the participants in "Revkam" fled. Hanoch, the son of the water carrier, was captured by the Polish in Kniesin [Knyszyn], and they beat him severely. Thanks to the Jews of Kniesin, who collected a substantial sum of ransom money, he was freed. …
>
> When the Polish Army returned to Goniondz, the priest blocked their way with crosses. He asked the soldiers not to treat the Jews harshly … The Jews put up large posters announcing that they were going to distribute bread without cost to the Polish military. The old Polish mayor established a new town council. He included some young Jewish men in the new council, who were with staffs for purposes of guard duty. There were four guards assigned to each street to prevent attacks and robbery. … the critical transition took place without loss of life.

> [In ***Stawiski*** near Łomża:] Many [Jews] joined up with communism in 1921, when the Bolsheviks invaded Poland, and our town was under their rule for a period. I remember that when they entered our town, the faithful of the revolution, who were mostly Jews, went out to welcome them. Many of the Jewish young people were very proud when Golda the daughter of the teacher Hertzke Kolinski stood at the helm of the "Rebkum" (town council) ["Revkom" (revolutionary committee)]. The Rebkum consisted mainly of young people in their twenties. Golda was a proud and capable girl, and Hertzke, the brother of Chaim Kadish [and son of Rev Avraham Ber], had the characteristics of a leader, sure of himself and quick to make decisions. [Elsewhere he is referred to as the "leader of the local communists", and when Hertzke Kolinski took control of the

government, he is said to have "treated harshly" anyone who appeared to him to be "counter-revolutionary."—*M.P.*] In the battles that took place between the Red Army and the Polish Army, a general of the Red Army was killed, and the activists of the communist movement in our town made him a state funeral. Golda and Hertzke walked at the front of the procession, with black armbands on their sleeves and red flags in their hands, and the band played revolutionary music. We children followed after the funeral procession until it reached the military cemetery. If my memory serves me correctly, Perlman carried the main red flag. We were children and did not understand anything about the ideology, however we were proud that Jews had reached such greatness.

[Also in ***Stawiski***:] There was a fear that the Polish army that would come on the heels of the retreating [Red] army would see every Jew as a communist. There would be no shortage of groups among the gentiles who would support this notion, in particular since the city government during the time of the Bolsheviks was almost all Jewish. …

As the Polish army hesitated to enter the town, lest they find remnants of the Bolshevik army in town, a delegation of Jews went out to inform them that the town was clear of the enemy.

The Polish Army entered the town in the evening, and filled up the entire Market Square. According to an edict from the Jewish guard, all of the stores were opened wide, and the Jews welcomed the arriving army with joy, and gave them some of the goods that they had left. … We were happy that we were saved from "blood of revenge" in their anger.

During the civil war in Finland in 1918, some 200 Finnish civilians, men and women, were executed by a Swedish battalion in Western Uusimaa. A division of Swedish volunteers executed 260 Finnish civilians in the Forsaa region in April 1918. In this case 13 of the executed were women and the youngest was only 16-year-old. Most victims were leftist, practically all of them were Finnish. But one did not have to live close to the front line or even in a theatre of war to fall victim to the rage of fellow citizens, as Jews in the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia learned. According to historian Livia Rothkirchen,

Anti-Semitic demonstrations and looting took place in Prague and some other localities, occasionally accompanied by bloody attacks. The most severe assault occurred in the Moravian Holešov; the riots in December 1918 were initiated by members of an army unit from Kroměříž, who together with the local mob looted and destroyed Jewish homes and institutions. Among the victims were Hugo Gratzer (aged forty-three) and Heiman Grünbaum (twenty-one); ironically enough, both were assaulted on their return from the front. Police curfew and a special unit brought in from Brno finally put an end to the three-day pogrom.

This was not the last of the rioting. May 1919 saw demonstrations against high prices and profiteering, and Jewish shops and businesses were looted again in greater Prague. After a year od respite more sever disturbances occurred on November 19, 1920: mobs attacked the ancient Jewish Town Hall, which was temporarily sheltering Galician refugees. The mobs destroyed furniture and paintings and vandalized part of the community archives. The rioting became so violent that the American consul in Prague ordered that the American flag be hoisted over the Town Hall in order

> to protect the community premises. An alarmed Franz Kafka, witnessing the disturbances from the window of his apartment, recorded some of the appalling scenes.

In Toronto, Canada's second-largest city (at the time), thousands of ex-servicemen and ordinary citizens converged on Greek establishments and attacked Greek immigrants for several days when a large anti-Greek riot broke out in August 1918. According to Tom Gallant, chair of modern Greek history at Toronto's York University,

> More than 40 Greek businesses were destroyed, the city was put under martial law, troops were brought in and it took days of street fighting to restore order. Resentful of Greece's early absence from World War I (the country did not enter the war until 1917), returning Canadian troops developed a vitriolic animosity toward the Greek merchants and restaurateurs, who at that time were clustered in the downtown area between Yonge and Church Sts. …
>
> Then on Aug. 1, 1918, a crippled and inebriated Canadian veteran entered the White City Cafe at Yonge and Carlton Sts. and began a dispute with the establishment's Greek waiters. "Well, they beat him up and threw him out of the restaurant, and word gets out to the veterans, who tended to concentrate in the same (downtown) area where the Greeks lived," Gallant says. "And the following night, about 5,000 people led by 1,500 veterans take to the street … and they destroy every Greek business they come across. I mean they demolish them." Greek residents soon retaliated, Gallant says, and pitched battles around Yonge and Richmond Sts. eventually involved some 10,000 people and took two days to quell.

During that war tens of thousands of immigrants from Germany and Austria, many of them ethnic Ukrainians and Poles, were interned in Canadian camps as "enemy aliens," simply because of their national origin.

A frequent charge raised in relation to Jews who were killed in Poland in acts of revenge after the Soviet rout in June 1941 (though not in relation to revenge perpetrated on or by any other ethnic group) is racism. Poles, as a collective, are accused of murderous anti-Semitism by those who would ignore, or dismiss as inconsequential, the conduct of the Jews vis-à-vis Poles during the Soviet occupation. To tear these events from their historical context and to read into them, as some would have it, the overriding impetus of Polish anti-Semitism, or by the same token, anti-Polish conduct on the part of all Jews, is a dishonest and harmful aberration that needs to be given short shrift by serious scholars.

Another dishonest and hypocritical aspect of this argument centres on the claim that any consideration of Jewish conduct is by its very nature irrelevant, because the only determinative factor is Polish anti-Semitism, which has a long tradition steeped in the Poles' Catholic religion and history, with particular emphasis being placed on the, at times, volatile interwar period. Rationally, it would make little sense that Jews did not harbour certain feelings and preconceived notions about Poles, just as Poles did about Jews. What were they? Rather than accept the pundits' assurances that they were quite obviously reactive defences to innate and irrational Polish hostility, and nothing more, let's take the trouble to look at and

listen to honest testimonies from that period before advocating *selective* objections to xenophobia. (A *small* sampling is offered below.) And let's not assume that xenophobia, though ethically repugnant and harmful, automatically sparks violent outburts. Xenophobic communities have managed to live side by side in relative peace more often than waring with each other. What the careful observer will learn is that traditional anti-Polish/Christian attitudes among Jews had a self-perpetuating life of their own and could be every bit as harsh as Polish views vis-à-vis Jews. (This is not to say, of course, that both sides had the same opportunity to act out their baser insticts from time to time. That dubious privilege generally falls to the dominant group, who are often helped along by meddling conquerors who pit one group against the other to further their goals.)

Rabbi Byron L. Sherwin of Spertus College of Judaica in Chicago expressed the following thoughts on this topic: "Similarly, it does not seem to occur to some Jews that manifestations of Polish anti-Semitism might be reactions to Jewish clanishness and parochialism. As a character in Isaac Bashevis Singer's novel *The Manor* puts it: 'How can anyone move into someone else's home, live there in total isolation, and expect not to suffer by it? When you despise your host's god as a tin image, shun his wine as forbidden, condemn his daughter as unclean, aren't you asking to be treated as an unwelcome outsider? It's as simple as that.'" How this impacted on day-to-day life in Poland, right up to the Second World War, is illustrated by the following testimonies. In his book *Shattered Faith,* Leon Weliczker Wells, adviser to the Holocaust Library in New York, who hails from Eastern Galicia, observed:

> Our small town, Stojanow [Stojanów], had about a thousand Jews and an equal number of Poles and Ukrainians. … We looked down on the small farmer, whom we called *Cham,* which was an old traditional way of saying *Am Haaretz* (people of the earth), which to us meant simpletons. …
>
> We lived in a self-imposed ghetto without walls. The Jewish religion fostered our living together in groups which separated us from non-Jews. … All of these [religious] restrictions caused the Jews to live in ghetto-like societies so that they could maintain their Jewish way of life. … We had virtually no contact with the outside world, surely not social contact, as our interests and responsibilities were completely different from the *goish's.* … We young Jewish boys did not take part in any sports as this was considered *goish.* … We Jews even tried to avoid passing a church, and if that was impossible, we muttered an appropriate curse as we hurried by. …
>
> We Jews felt superior to all others, as we were the "chosen people," chosen by God Himself. We even repeated it in our prayers at least three times a day, morning, afternoon, and evening … The farmers, who, even considering their low living standards, couldn't support an entire family, sent their daughters to town to become servants in the Jewish households. I never knew a Jewish girl to be a servant in a Polish household, but the reverse was the norm. The gentile maid was referred to in negative terms as the "shiksa" (Hebrew for "a vermin like a cockroach"). [In Polish, the term had the added etymological connotation of "urine-dripping" girl.] There was a repertoire of jokes about these girls. For example, there was the joke about how Jewish mothers made sure that the servants were "clean," because their sons' first sexual experience was usually with this girl. …
>
> We were strangers to the neighboring gentiles because of our religion, language, behavior, dress, and daily values. Poland was the only country where a nation lived within a nation. … In Poland

> the Jew dressed completely different from others, had beards and *peyes* (side curls), spoke a different language (Yiddish), went to separate religious schools, and sometimes even to different public schools … Since every meal on Sabbath and holidays started with the blessing of the wine, there was no possibility of a pious Jew sharing a festive meal with a gentile because the wine, once opened, became nonkosher if a gentile merely looked at it. The laws of kashruth prevented a Jew from eating at a gentile's nonkosher table. Thus, there was very little social intercourse between Jews and non-Jews. We never spoke Polish at home, only Yiddish. Polish was negatively called *goish.* When we spoke Polish we had a Yiddish accent. The newspapers and books in our homes were in Yiddish. … We lived in a strictly self-imposed ghetto, and it suited our requirements and wishes. … Our parents not only praised that time [i.e., Austrian rule] as being better for the Jews, but spoke with pride about the superiority of German culture and its people compared to the Polish culture. This attitude was very badly received by the Polish people. … The belief that German culture was superior continued even to the time when Germany occupied Poland in 1939, and in its eastern part in 1941.

The pro-German sentiments mentioned by Weliczker Wells should not be underestimated. Nor should religious and ethnic loyalty and solidarity. As Professor Yacov Talmon from the Russian partition of Poland, acknowledged,

> … many important factors infused in the Jews a spirit of contempt and hatred towards the Poles. In contrast to the organizational activity and capacity of the Germans, the Jews saw the Poles as failures. The rivals most difficult to Jews, in the economic and professional fields were the Poles, and we must not underrate the closeness of Yiddish to the German language as well. I still remember that during my childhood the name "goy" sounded to me as referring to Catholic Poles and not to Germans; though I did realize that the latter were obviously not Jews, I felt that the Germans in the vicinity were not simply Gentiles.
>
> It would be shocking to think of it to-day, but the pre-Hitlerite relations between Jews and Germans in our vicinity were friendly. … In the twenties, Jews and Germans stood together on election lists. Out of those Germans rose such who, during the German invasion, helped in the acts of repression and extermination as experts, who had the experience and knew the secrets.
>
> It is not surprising, then, that in the mixed loyalties of the time Jewish unity grew stronger and deeper, and consciousness in this direction burned like a flame. … the actual motherland was not a temporal one, but a heavenly one, a vision and a dream—to the religious it was the coming of the Messiah, to the Zionists it was a Jewish country, to the Communists and their friends it was a world revolution. And the real constitution according to which they lived was the Shulhan Aruch, code of laws, and the established set of virtues, or the theories of Marx, and the rules of Zionism and the building up of a Jewish country.

Traditional values permeated the Jewish community, and these were generally hostile towards non-Jews. There is abundant confirmation of this in Jewish memoirs. Christian Poles were regarded as "generally an ignorant lot, especially the peasants," states Michel Mielnicki, who hails from Wasilków. "But I didn't spit

on the ground at the sight of a Roman Catholic nun, as some Jews did," Mielnicki makes a point of stating. "And I didn't think to condemn all Christians for worshipping a false messiah and his mother." Confirmation of these assessments can be found in many Jewish memoirs. Halina Birenbaum concedes: "The Poles were 'goys' … who were regarded as pagans, we criticized or ridiculed their tastes, customs, beliefs … We were not taught mutual sympathy for them. They were different, foreign to us, and we to them, often our open or hidden enemies." When Birenbaum, who lived in Warsaw, visited her grandparents in a small town she was warned not to venture near a church, because that was forbidden by the Jewish religion. "I was eight years old then," she recalled, "and I was taught to fear 'goys' and their distinct character. How then was I to look for or anticipate salvation on the 'Aryan' side when we were sentenced to annihilation?"

Anna Lanota, a psychologist who hails from Łódź, made the following observations: "The [Jewish] community [in which I lived] had a somewhat unfavourable attitude toward other nations—maybe even contemptuous. There prevailed the feeling that we were the chosen people. In school there was that same atmosphere that Jews were the chosen people. We did not pay attention to what others might be saying about us." Samuel Oliner, a Jewish scholar, recalled his childhood days in a village in southern Poland:

> Since I was illiterate at seven, my education was not off to a very good start. 'Shmulek will grow up to be a stupid *goy*!' lamented my grandmother. … My father put down his pencil and glanced at me. '… The Poles are not the chosen people of God.'… One day I rode with Mendel to get farm supplies in Dukla. On the way home he whipped up the horse as we passed the gypsy camp. The frown on his face showed exactly how he felt … The presence of a gentile defiled the home of a Jew, and no good was certain to come of it. … some Jews regarded the Poles with contempt and caution, but we had still been on good terms.

Dora Kacnelson, who lived in Białystok before the war, said: "There are tolerant Jews, like my father for instance, but there are also fanatical ones, holding on tight to old traditions. … The orthodox Jews considered Christians to be beneath them." Irena Kisielewska, born into a middle class family in Piotrków, a fairly large city in central Poland, recalled:

> And what did I know about the other, non-Jewish world? In my home we spoke about goys with a certain irony and aversion which found its strongest expression in my grandmother's saying 'Meine shlekhte khulims of ale goims kieps,' which roughly means 'May my worse dreams fall on their heads.' But I do not recall any conflict except for one incident when someone threw a stone into the prayer house on the Feast of Tabernacles during prayers. Generally, the tenants in our home opened their windows to hear these prayers. My grandfather had a beautiful voice and apparently I wasn't the only one who enjoyed listening to him. I was warned about hooligans who attacked Jewish children on their way from school, but I do not recall ever having encountered something like that. … I don't think that I ever asked myself before the war whether I was Polish or Jewish. I was Jewish, and that was obvious. My Polishness was accidental since some of my ancestors had settled

> here, but could just as well have settled elsewhere. … My father spoke Polish poorly, but my mother spoke it impeccably. My parents spoke Yiddish between themselves but spoke to [the children] in Polish. Neither I nor Ala knew Yiddish. My means of expression was therefore the Polish language, but it didn't mean anything special to me. … Polish literature had no appeal for me nor did it have any impact on my state of mind … I do not recall ever being moved by the partitions of Poland or the country's loss of independence. That was not part of my history. I knew only too well that none of my ancestors had taken part in any Polish uprising. … In my family—and I'm thinking here above all about my grandparents, goys were spoken of with a certain disdain. They were the ones who didn't know that Christ was not the Messiah. Moreover, just like the pagans, they prayed to pictures. … the boundary between our world and their strange world was laden with an entire system of taboos. I knew that the worst, the most unimaginable sin was to convert. It was not permissible even to assume a kneeling position, even through inadvertence.

According to Lucien Steinberg, "The non-Jews were not wholly responsible for [the] inevitable barrier [between them], even though they might greet any friendly advance with reserve. The Jews themselves distrusted those of their own kind who tried to strike up a relationship with 'the others,' and there was always that underlying fear of losing substance." A Jew from the city of Konin remarked in retrospect: "You need to look at it both ways. The Jews never mixed with their neighbours. The community tried to separate itself. … I think the Jews could have mixed more with their neighbours and still kept their identity." Another testimony from Konin states: "Jewish parents discouraged their children from forming friendships with Polish children. 'My father would not let me bring *shikses* [a derogatory term for female Christians] into the house,' one woman remembers, 'and he would not let me go to their homes …' Socializing between unmarried Jews and Christians of the opposite sex was taboo. … Thus Jewish apartheid … persisted not solely as a result of Christian prejudice but through choice."

A Jewish woman who lived in a tenement in Mińsk Mazowiecki, near Warsaw, has similar recollections:

> Our neighbors were the Izbrechts, a Polish family … The youngest girl was named Józka, and I played with her all the time despite the fact that my grandmother beat me good so that I would not play with her. My grandmother did not allow me to play with Józka Izbrecht because she was Polish and she feared that if I went to her home I would eat something with pork in it. So my grandmother beat me, but I still played with Józka.

Fanya Gottesfeld Heler, who grew up in Skała, in southeastern Poland, recalled:

> We knew little about the gentiles; they lived their lives and we lived our lives. … Business was the main contact between us. … One of my fellow pupils was the grandson of the manager of the count's estate … As children, this boy and I played hide-and-seek in the estate's huge and beautiful park … His family would invite me at Christmas to see the tree … But typical of our relationship with the gentiles, we never invited them to our home for Chanukah.

Sally Grubman recalled her childhood in the large industrial city of Łódź:

> It was one of those integrated areas where Jews clung together and had nothing to do with the gentiles. We never visited our gentile neighbors and they didn't visit us. The children didn't play together. I remember once there was some Easter celebration and the girl next door wanted to show me the beautiful table. She sneaked me in for a moment when no one was looking—just to look—and then I left.

Władysław Bartoszewski, one of the members of the wartime Council for Aid to Jews (Żegota), stated that, when he was growing up in a tenement-house in a primarily Jewish area of prewar Warsaw, the mothers of the Jewish children often scolded their children for playing with "that stupid, Polish *goy*." Martin Zaidenstadt, from Jedwabne, remembered his father's disapproval of his playing soccer with the Polish boys in town. On one occasion he was whacked thrice with a thick leather strap for the specific misdeed of playing soccer with the *shaigitzi* and for missing temple.

And, as candid Jewish witnesses (such as Joanna Wiszniewicz) admit, even culturally assimilated Jews from the educated classes—doctors, lawyers, professors—who spoke only Polish, generally considered themselves to be Jews, not Poles, and shunned personal contacts with Poles. But societal pressures were especially strong in small towns and villages where breaches of traditional norms were treated mercilessly.

In Baranowicze, Sara Bytenski, the daughter of a pious Jew was spotted one afternoon behind some trees kissing her Christian boyfriend. A group of teenaged Jewish boys spontaneously rallied to her "defence":

> When the man turned his head, our horror turned to outrage. He was a "goy"—a Gentile! For us, it was not only sin, it was mortal sin—a Jewish soul was in danger of being lost! We looked at each other, wild-eyed. She had to be saved—it was our sacred duty! There were plenty of stones lying around; collecting pocketfuls of them we stormed forward, valiant saviours, hurling our weapons of destruction at the infamous desecrators … A few months later we all had a second shock. The poor girl had had no success in convincing her family that her lover was willing to convert to our faith in order to marry her, so she ran away with him. The shame of it was too much for her father, a poor but well-respected tailor. He declared a whole year of mourning, closed his shop and sat, all day long on the floor, wearing a torn black garment praying loudly and begging the Almighty for forgiveness for the daughter, now dead to him, who had brought such shame and humiliation on her parents and her people alike.

Needless to add, Jews who embraced Christianity were treated with particular aversion. In the small town of Ejszyszki, near Wilno, "the Jewish community lost no opportunity to express its revulsion toward [Goldke]," who had converted to Catholicism to marry a Catholic man. When Meir Hilke converted to Catholicism in 1921 to marry a Catholic woman, "Not a single Jew was to be found on the streets … and all the doors and windows were shut against the terrible sight." But such attitudes were also common in large centres. Maurice Shainberg, a Jew from a well-to-do Orthodox family from Warsaw faced universal

ostracism on the part of his family, friends and community for courting a Polish Christian girl from his own neighbourhood. Some of his acquaintances were very frank about the consequences: "'How can you walk down the street with her?' he asked. 'You'll be ostracized, beaten, ridiculed. Your own people are going to hate you … What's going to happen when your father finds out? You may give him a heart attack.'" To escape the harassment, they frequented one of the better Polish restaurants: "I didn't have to worry about being heckled for dating a Polish girl. No one paid any attention to us." Eventually, he "started calling for her at her apartment, and her parents didn't seem to mind."

Paradoxically, anti-assimilationist attitudes were promoted in Poland by Jews who had settled in the United States and Western Europe, even though they would never have advocated the same stance there. Lucy Dawidowicz, who before the war paid an extended visit to Wilno, where most Jews spoke Yiddish and knew little, if any, Polish, wrote:

> Not knowing Polish, I didn't get to meet many of those Polish-speaking university-educated Jews. That didn't bother me, for I had somehow come to believe that they weren't my kind of people and didn't live in my kind of world. … The other Polish speakers whom I met, yet barely knew, I labeled as "assimilated," even "assimilationist," that is, advocates of assimilation. Those were a Yiddishist's pejorative words, darkly intimating that to speak Polish instead of Yiddish was a public act of betrayal, an abandonment of one's people.

Another extreme manifestation of Jewish anti-Christian attitudes, though certainly not unusual, was recorded by Dr. Abraham Sterzer from Eastern Galicia:

> I received the traditional Jewish education in a "heder" (religious school). Our rabbi insisted that we Jewish children spit on the ground and utter curses while passing near a cross, or whenever we encountered a Christian priest or religious procession. Our shopkeepers used to say that "it is a Mitzveh (blessed deed) to cheat a Goy (gentile)."

Indeed, the sight of Jews spitting when passing a roadside cross or deliberately avoiding a church was commonplace in prewar Poland. Another Jew, Benjamin Bender, recalled the stern admonition he received as a boy in Częstochowa: "My grandfather admonished me to stay away from the church, promising harsh heavenly punishment in the event I didn't heed his warning."

The Brzozów Memorial Book, published in 1984, records the following testimony, not realizing the irony of those words and admonitions:

> The oldsters of the former generation had a long account with the Church and always tried to bypass it when in the neighbourhood, turning their heads away so as not to see it. … so, too, in the matter of the Church, we saw just how right they had been. The very name of the Church aroused not only the fears buried in the sub-conscious and associations … it also stood for all the evils of the present … It was not love of man that emanated from it but hatred. Ignorant priests, hoodlums

> in vestments, used its "sacred pulpits" to preach sermons that incited brutish masses. Possessed by a fathomless hatred of the Jews they could not rest until their dream of a Juden-rein Poland was so monstrously realized before their very eyes. … The Church—that was the source of this evil, the fountain-head that nourished it all.

Yet we also learn, from the testimony of a Jew from Brzozów who served in the Polish army and was taken prisoner by the Germans in the September 1939 campaign, that Polish nuns in Rzeszów brought food and encouragement to both Polish and Jewish prisoners of war alike.

Rachmiel Frydland, who grew up among Christians in the Chełm region and was educated in a *yeshiva,* wrote:

> Our relations with the non-Jewish population were never very good … There were the Polish-speaking Gentiles who were Roman Catholics, some more pious than others. We were most afraid of them. We considered them idol worshipers. My parents were proud to point out to me that they taught their children to consider the images on their walls as gods. There was not a home without at least three images: one of Jesus, with His heart showing; one of the *matka boska,* the "mother of God"; and one of Joseph, the husband of Mary. The priest would come to the village at times and bring the "transubstantiated" wafer, which they believed became the flesh and blood of the Messiah. But at that time the priest's coming only hardened our hearts. We knew we worshiped the only true God, and not priests and images. …
>
> In these early years I had few contacts of any sort with Christianity. At about this time I learned the stories of Jesus from the Jewish point of view. They are given in the infamous book of legends composed in the Middle Ages and entitled *Toledot Yeshu (The History of Jesus).* Some of the material is already embodied in the Talmud: that Jesus was born an illegitimate child and He forced Mary His mother to admit it; how He learned sorcery in Egypt; how He made Himself fly up into the sky by sewing the ineffable name of Jehovah into the skin of his leg, but a famous rabbi did the same and brought Jesus down! …
>
> Thus in the yeshiva, the Talmud reigned supreme. The Old Testament Bible could be used only for reference and there were no secular studies whatsoever.
>
> I had no contacts with Christianity at all. On the way to school we passed a Roman Catholic church and a Russian Orthodox church, and we spat, pronouncing the words found in Deuteronomy 7:26, "… thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing." I said it halfheartedly because of my previous favorable contact with Christianity and because some questions were beginning to creep into my mind. Why should we say such horrible words? The people looked pious. They came from surrounding villages to worship, and they never bothered us.
>
> As I continued studying the Talmud, I came to a passage that told of a cruel punishment for that Sinner of Israel, meaning Jesus. For one sin of deriding the rabbis, He was punished forever and ever with cruelty as to be "judged in boiling excrement." I did not like this story at all. Did it really mean what it said? Could I possibly be in full agreement with this? Did not I also have doubts about the rabbis' claims that their teachings were given to Moses on Mount Sinai? What then would *my* punishment be? It was many years before I dared to proclaim these doubts openly.

The hatred toward Christianity ran deep, was undoubtedly palpable to the Poles, and was enduring. The cross was particularly loathed as an evil omen. Albin (Tobiasz) Koc from Nowy Sącz recalled how rascally Jewish children from religious schools (*heders*) would beset pious, elderly Jews, cross two fingers, and taunt them by calling out, "a tsailim" (Hebrew for "crucifix"). The enraged, elderly Jews would respond with dire warnings, the traditional spitting, chasing, and even rock throwing. There were, of course, Jews who tried to shake off this legacy. One witness (Rabbi Abraham D. Feffer) recalls his father telling him and his siblings "to respect Gentiles, especially good Christians. [He] did not want us to refer to them in the derisive word 'goy', but that it should rather be 'Krist' for a man and 'Kristen' for a woman."

As could be expected, there was also an infusion of racist stereotyping on the part of the Jews that accentuated, beyond all proportion, certain negative qualities found in Polish society. For example, British-Jewish intellectual Rafael F. Scharf recalls a Jewish song from his youth spent in Kraków that "ran something like this: *Shiker is a goy—Shiker is er—trinken miz er—weil er is a goy* (A goy is a drunkard—but drink he must—because he is a goy.)" Scharf also underscored the sense of self-imposed separateness and isolation that, on the whole, historically divided the Polish and Jewish communities:

> … many Jews, if they spoke Polish at all, spoke with a funny accent. …
> Even in a small place like Cracow, where Kazimierz, the Jewish quarter, existed cheek by jowl with the non-Jewish, the lives of those neighbouring communities were, in many important senses, separate. It was possible for a Jew to grow up in a family circle, study, or prepare for a trade yet not cross the border dividing the Polish and Jewish communities. A great many Jews, in the district of Nalewki in Warsaw, in the hundreds of "shtetlach", besides a sporadic contact with a supplier or a client lived thus—not together, but next to each other, on parallel lines, in a natural, contended isolation. During my whole life in Cracow, till my departure before the war, I was never inside a truly Polish home, whose smell, caught in passing, was somehow different, strange. I did not miss it, considered this division natural. I also do not remember whether in our home, always full of people, guests, visitors, passers-by, friends of my parents, my brother's and mine, there ever was a non-Jew, except for one neighbour and the caretaker who would come to collect his tips, and, of course, the maid who inhabited the kitchen.

Are we to disbelieve these testimonies or reject them as irrelevant or insignificant? If not, what was the impact of *that legacy* on Polish-Jewish relations? We need not look to the pundits for any enlightenment on this topic. In short, there are many testimonies attesting to the fact that Jews displayed as broad a range of attitudes and emotions concerning the Poles, as undoubtedly Poles did toward the Jews. Because of their traditional upbringing, often these were very negative. It would fly in the face of reason and common sense to conclude that these did not carry over into the wartime period, both under Soviet and German occupation, and that they would not have been exacerbated by the devastating and intrusive policies of the two most murderous totalitarian regimes of the Twentieth Century. But to assign to them an overriding role

without first carefully examining and analyzing the impact of actual events as they unfolded is a foolhardy venture. That approach does not befit a serious observer of those troubling times.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

A Belated But Reluctant Awareness

During the war, while the events were still fresh and looming, Polish political and military leaders were alarmed by what had occurred and voiced strong concerns about their impact on Polish-Jewish relations. Moreover, the topic was raised repeatedly at meetings of Polish and Jewish underground organizations. Emanuel Ringelblum, the chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto, was well aware of the charges. As historian Samuel Kassow notes,

> He doubtless had also read several Jewish accounts, given to the Oneg Shabes archive, that seemed to corroborate some of these Polish claims. In April 1940 Ringelblum mentioned Jewish testimonies, from Białystok and Zamość, that described how Jews had jeered Polish officers and former civil servants. He also described a conversation with a Polish writer who had been friendly to Jews. The writer had returned from Soviet-occupied Poland and had seen how a Russian soldier and a freshly baked Jewish commissar had searched the suitcases of two Polish students. Suddenly the Jew spied a crucifix in the suitcase; it had been given to the student by his mother. The Jewish commissar threw it away, but the soldier retrieved it and gave it back to the student. "You understand," the writer told Ringelblum, "I can understand something like this, but it is a great surprise if an uneducated 17 year old becomes an antisemite? Why must the Jews be more Catholic than the pope?" Ringelblum noted this without comment or protest, except to add that many Jews were also coming back with similar stories.

General Władysław Sikorski, the leader of the Polish government-in-exile, appealed in vain to Jewish circles to condemn the activities of those Jews who had collaborated with the Soviets and committed crimes against Polish citizens.

The only Jewish group known to have spoken out publicly on this topic were the Polish patriots, a tight group of former Polish officers and non-commissioned officers, who formed the little known Jewish Military Union (Żydowski Związek Wojskowy–ŻZW) in the Warsaw ghetto. (In Western literature one generally hears only about the larger Jewish Fighting Organization (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa–ŻOB).) In the April 1942 issue of their underground publication *Żagiew,* ŻZW boldly called for accountability by those Jews, and non-Jews, who collaborated with the Soviets in the Eastern Borderlands. The vast majority of the Polish-Jewish leadership simply ignored the problem.

At that time, unbiased, knowledgeable observers readily acknowledged that Poles had ample cause for resentment in light of what had happened in Eastern Poland. Their feeling of bitterness was not, as many Jews would now have it, just some irrational and unsubstantiated bigotry that Poles were expressing. Reports of Jewish behaviour in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland did not escape the attention of British

officials who did not hesitate to label such conduct as collaboration and aver that the Jews were the mainstay of the Bolshevik regime.

In April 1940, officials at the British Embassy to Poland (at that time situated in Angers, France, where the Polish government was exiled) wrote to the British Foreign Office:

> As regards the present attitude of the Poles, and especially of those now in foreign countries, towards Jews and the Jewish question we must not forget that in September last the Jewish population in the provinces occupied by the U.S.S.R., notably in Eastern Galicia, with the exception of the wealthy Jews who had much property to lose, sided in the main with the Russian invaders. According to recent reports which have passed through my hands the Jews in those parts of Poland are still the main support of the Bolshevik regime.

In a similar tone, the British War Office wrote: "The Jews' behaviour in Poland during the Russian advance must clearly have caused a feeling of animosity in Army circles which I think justified."

Because of the Poles' preoccupation with other more pressing matters, a veil of silence descended on the activities of local collaborators, although thousands of accounts detailing this phenomenon were gathered by the Polish Army from Polish deportees liberated from the Gulag and deposited after the war in the Hoover Institution in Stanford, California. Polish emigré authorities had no interest in publicizing these matters in the immediate postwar period since they underscored the hostility of the minorities, and hence undermined Polish claims to the Eastern Borderlands, which the Soviet Union had severed from Poland. Since Jews were universally portrayed as the primary victims of the war (which was true with respect to the Nazis), it seemed inconceivable that some of them could also have been among the villains (i.e., in the role of Soviet collaborators). Moreover, given the (belated) anti-Nazi alliance that the West had forged with the Soviet Union, the latter's role in wartime atrocities was not publicized or, to put it more precisely, was hushed up for political reasons for many decades. Since Stalin—"Uncle Joe"—was portrayed as a staunch anti-Nazi ally, how could assisting him be characterized as wartime "collaboration"?

There has been a near universal unwillingness on the part of Jewish historiography to come to terms with this aspect of the dark side of Jewish wartime conduct. A fuller appreciation of what transpired in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland has only recently made inroads among a small number of Jewish historians and intellectuals. In his important essay, "Tabu i niewinność" (translated as "Jews as a Polish Problem"), Aleksander Smolar, a Polish-Jewish émigré intellectual, wrote that "the welcome extended to the Bolsheviks was above all a demonstration of a separate identity, of being different from those against whom the Soviets were waging war—from the Poles—a refusal to be identified with the Polish state."

Smolar acknowledged that many Jews, not only Communists, took up positions in the Soviet administration and collaborated with the Soviet security forces in identifying and hunting down targeted Poles. He went on to appraise the resultant conflict that inevitably arose between Polish and Jewish society thus:

> In no other country in Europe did the clash of Jewish interests and attitudes with those of the surrounding population reach such dramatic proportions as they did in Poland under the Soviet occupation of 1939–1941. In other occupied countries, the Jews were in conflict with parts of the surrounding population—with local collaborators, for example—but they were united in solidarity with the rest of society. *In Poland, under the Soviet occupation, it was the Jews who were regarded as collaborators. This should be borne in mind if one wants to speak honestly about mutual relations between Poles and Jews.* (emphasis added)

Moreover, pro-Soviet sympathies were by no means restricted to Communists or to those Jews residing in Eastern Poland. After surveying the underground Jewish press in the Warsaw ghetto, Teresa Prekerowa notes in her aforementioned study, that strong pro-Soviet sentiments were displayed by certain Zionist factions there as well. Leftist Zionists saw their future linked with the Communists, whom the Poles considered an enemy on a par with the Nazis. Well into 1941, Hashomer Hatsa'ir, for example, regarded the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939 and the consequent partition of Poland to be a "wise and justified" development. Mordechai Anielewicz, the young leader of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, was the editor of a periodical that openly embraced communism over capitalism and the Soviet Union over Poland.

The Polish underground was well aware of these leanings and, understandably, sometimes less than enthusiastic when these same groups turned to them for arms and other forms of military assistance. As we know, however, help was not withheld to the Jewish insurgents of Warsaw even though the Home Army's resources were scarce and the Jewish struggle obviously doomed. Polish-Jewish historian Marian Fuks has stated: "It is an absolutely certain fact that without help and even active participation of the Polish resistance movement [i.e., the Home Army] it would not have been possible at all to bring about the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto." Marek Edelman, the last surviving leader of the revolt, expressed a similar view: "We didn't get adequate help from the Poles, but without their help we couldn't have started the uprising. … You have to remember that the Poles themselves were short of arms. The guilty party is Nazism, fascism—not the Poles."

It is also worth noting that unlike commemorations in honour of Poles who risked their lives to assist Jews, which have been marred by incessant recriminations of anti-Semitism levelled against Poles (e.g., the unveiling of the Żegota monument in Warsaw in September 1995), the unveiling (earlier that same year) of a monument in Warsaw to commemorate the Polish citizens deported by the Soviets in 1939–1941, regardless of their faith, was not used by Poles as an occasion to hurl accusations against the Soviets' many collaborators (mostly non-Poles including many Jews) at whose hands the Poles suffered disproportionately.

The admissions of Aleksander Smolar are the closest thing to a public reckoning by anyone on the Jewish side for the behaviour of far too many Jews in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland. Only this year, were they seconded by Michael Schudrich, rabbi of Warsaw and Łódź, who stated:

> We Jews have to acknowledge that there were Jews in the service of the Communists, or even the Nazis, who committed crimes against the Poles, and also against other Jews. However, they never said that they were doing this in the name of the Jewish nation. Nevertheless, the time has come for us Jews to feel and understand the Polish pain in order for the Poles to feel and understand our pain.

These events continue to fester on the Polish psyche like a sore wound. Without a candid and open recognition of the dimensions of these tragic events and a collective apology to the Polish nation they will stand as an insurmountable impasse to Polish-Jewish *rapprochement.*

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